

## Neutral Grounds

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# Neutral Grounds

by [nervousn8](#)

## Summary

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“What do you want from inside of it?” Tommy asks the man trying to rob him, flipping his wallet open and thumbing through the cards inside. “You want my Student ID card? You want my coupon for a free smoothie at the gas station a couple of streets down? You want this card some guy gave me advertising his rapper career?”

“That’s- that’s all you have?” The man seems shocked, but Tommy doesn’t know why he would be. There’s nothing about him that really screams ‘wealthy and important’.

“I’m a broke college student- of course that’s all I have.”

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Nervousn8 writes a superhero au where Tommy is a Normal Guy just trying to make it through college while avoiding all his problems and sleeping. He's not having a very good time, especially not when these fucking rich people keep trying to give him pity money.

# Free Smoothie Coupon Gone Wrong

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Tommy is currently being held at gunpoint. At two in the afternoon. Who the fuck holds someone at gunpoint at two in the afternoon???

“Give me everything you have in your wallet,” the masked man says. He looks incredibly calm for someone who is literally holding a gun to another person’s head in the middle of the sidewalk at *two in the afternoon*. “Give me all of it, and you won’t get hurt.”

Now, Tommy From A Couple Of Months Ago would’ve emptied his wallet then and there. That Tommy wasn’t chronically sleep-deprived and minorly suicidal, though, so Present Tommy is going to do exactly none of the wallet-emptying. He’s just cool like that.

“What do you want from inside of it?” Tommy asks the man trying to rob him, flipping his wallet open and thumbing through the cards inside. “You want my Student ID card? You want my coupon for a free smoothie at the gas station a couple of streets down? You want this card some guy gave me advertising his rapper career?”

“That’s- that’s all you have?” The man seems shocked, but Tommy doesn’t know why he would be. There’s nothing about him that really screams ‘wealthy and important’.

“I’m a broke college student- of course that’s all I have.”

The man holding him at gunpoint is silent for a while, and Tommy thinks he can hear police sirens in the distance, but then the man pulls the gun from his head. He’s gonna have a bruise above his eyebrow from when this bitch smacked him with it. “Give me the coupon,” he says.

“You’re gonna take a broke college kid’s smoothie coupon?” Someone across the street asks. There have been a lot of people watching the spectacle, but no one has been trying to help. That’s what Tommy gets for moving to L’Manburg, not that it was his choice.

“He either gives it to me or he dies,” the robber snarls, apparently angry after being challenged. Tommy just shrugs, pulling the coupon out of his wallet and handing it to the guy. His schedule isn’t exactly free enough for him to get a smoothie anyway, but he could’ve used it to get someone to do his homework for him. Oh well.

The masked man scurries off in another direction, and Tommy turns to watch him go. A look at his phone screen -bless his phone, his darling Clementine, with her beautiful moth sticker and her severe cracking- tells him the whole debacle took ten minutes, and he throws his head back with a groan. That’s ten minutes of sleep he just lost for a smoothie coupon and a bruise.

Being alive is a chore.

He crosses the street into his place of work, waving at the old woman who likes to sit outside and smoke as he ducks his way inside. She sits out there from noon to around three, Tommy’s noticed. He’s not sure what she’s doing out there, but to each their own and all that.

“Hey, Tommy,” Sam calls from behind the counter. He owns this place, calls it ‘Neutral Grounds’ like the fucking dad he is. The dad vibes stop at the green hair, but maybe he’s a cool dad. “How was school?”

“It was fine, Sam,” Tommy answers, scrubbing a fist into one of his eyes.

“Do you need any help with homework?”

He shakes his head, dumping his bag into a booth in the corner and sinking down beside it. He lets his head fall into crossed arms, frowning only a little when he can hear Sam’s footsteps approaching him over the chatter of the other patrons.

“You good, kid?”

Tommy peeks out of his arms, giving Sam his best smile. “Just tired, Sammy Boy. I was hoping to nap before my shift.”

Sam throws him a little smile, head tilted to the side as he leans down to ruffle Tommy’s hair. He tries not to chase after the touch when it’s gone.

“I’ll wake you up in time for your shift, kid. Get some sleep.” Sam really does sound like some kind of dad, and it’d be funny if it didn’t make Tommy’s chest ache. He tucks his face back into the fold of his arms and breathes a sharp sigh, but the world is already fading from him.

He shouldn’t have any nightmares with the background chatter of the patrons. It’s why he sleeps here so often. In his little booth in the back of the shop, safe under Sam’s watchful eyes and the cloaking anonymity of the city. It’s nice.

It’s a little less nice when he feels himself waking up, though. There’s less noise in the shop than before, but it’s not silent. Most of the noise is coming from outside, and that probably means it’s approaching rush hour. His shift will start soon. He taps at his phone screen where it rests under one arm, squinting against the light with a little frown to read the time. 4:42. Not terrible, Sam would’ve woken him up in about eight minutes anyway, but still.

“He’s eighteen, yeah.” Tommy hears Sam murmur, and it takes all of his control not to jerk his head up. He’d really prefer to not be talked about, that’s kind of rude.

“Just started out in college?” Another voice asks. This voice is gentle, a quality to it that Tommy immediately feels like he could listen to forever, but that won’t do. Absolutely not. The soft voices are always the bad ones.

“Mhm. Works the night shift here Monday through Saturday. I keep trying to get him to take fewer hours, but he’s real determined.” Sam answers. Now he *really* sounds like a concerned father.

Tommy makes a show of picking his head up, squinting at the bright lights that assault his eyes. There’s no one else in the coffee shop except for Sam and whoever the man is he’s

talking to, but the clock is approaching five, so they'll be flooding with people soon.

"You sleep okay?" Sam asks him, sounding somehow both teasing and concerned. Tommy flips him off with one hand as he rubs his eyes with the other, and Sam barks a laugh. Good. Maybe they'll stop talking about him now. "C'mere, Tommy. I've got someone I want you to meet."

The other guy in the cafe is tall -unfortunately taller than Tommy- wearing a sweater covered in sheep and circular glasses with no lenses inside the frames. There's a guitar strapped to his back, and Tommy almost missed the beanie on his head. He's a fucking prick then, phenomenal.

Both of their faces get all constipated when Tommy comes over, and Sam grabs the sides of his face gently to stare at his forehead. Oh shit- *right*. He forgot about the bruise.

"What happened?" Sam asks him, brushing the pads of his fingers over Tommy's eyebrow. "Who did this to you?"

Tommy snickers, sending a shrug to Guitar Guy as he bats Sam's hands away. "I got held at gunpoint on my way here- the guy just hit me a little too hard. It's fine."

"You got held at gunpoint and you're *fine*?" Guitar Guy asks. He's staring at Tommy in both confusion and concern, and Tommy shrugs again.

"That's the shit that happens out here, dude. You either get used to it or you die."

Sam blinks several times before he lets go of Tommy's face, and Tommy thinks that'll be it. Then Sam says, "This is my friend Wilbur Soot. His dad gives out scholarships for LMU, and I was talking to him about whether or not you would qualify."

Tommy continues to squint at the two of them, glancing between 'Wilbur Soot' and Sam. Wilbur's name sounds familiar. He's heard it somewhere, he knows that. Somewhere before.

“Ah, shit,” Tommy hisses. “You’re that Philza Minecraft guy’s kid, aren’t you? The biological one.”

Wilbur bristles a little bit, but he doesn’t seem to really get mad. “Yes, I’m the only one of my dad’s sons who wasn’t adopted.”

“Must suck to be so shit that your dad had to go and buy a bunch more kids, huh?” He cringes as soon as he says it, cheeks heating up. “Sorry, that was- sorry. I didn’t mean that.”

“He’s feisty,” Wilbur says to Sam after a moment, and then he picks up his coffee and turns to leave.

“Tommy, really?” Sam scolds, and Tommy feels his cheeks heat up even further. “He was just trying to help.”

Tommy’s face twists, and he crosses his arms. “I don’t want pity, Sam. I’m not some charity case for rich fucks to throw money at to make themselves feel better.”

“A scholarship is a reward for doing well in school, which I know you are.”

“Would they have sought me out originally if you hadn’t brought it up, though? That’s pity, Sam. They’re pitying me.” He listens to the sound of the little bell as Wilbur leaves, and then Tommy moves behind the counter to the little computer to clock in. He drops his bag in the backroom and ties his apron over his hoodie, and he heaves a sigh.

He doesn’t want special treatment anymore, he likes being like this. He likes being so busy he can’t sleep. It’s nice.

“Make sure you get your homework done during any slow time you have,” Sam tells him as he sets up in the little kitchen for the rush hour crowd. “I don’t want you falling behind in



school just for me.”

“Not doin’ it for you, big man,” Tommy calls back. He plasters a smile on his face when the bell tingles again, and he gets ready to take orders.

Twelve hours and then he’s home. He’ll be too exhausted to dream if he falls asleep, and then he’s got about three and a half hours to sleep before he has to get up for school. If necessary, he’ll just keep working on homework instead of sleeping. Or he’ll clean his shitty little apartment.

He taps the rings that hang from a chain around his neck where they rest under his hoodie once, twice, and then he hands the printed order for an exhausted-looking soccer mom to Sam. He’s all good.

Sam clocks out of work around seven most nights, and tonight is no different. He putters around the backroom with a certain kind of urgency to his step, brushing past Tommy where he hunches over his science homework several times. Each pass is paired with a hand ruffling Tommy’s hair, which he doesn’t think Sam is actually aware he’s doing, but he doesn’t say anything. He needs the job to keep him out of his apartment.

“Oh shit, sorry, Tommy,” Sam says at last, tugging his hand off of Tommy’s head. “I’m used to having Fran around when I get stressed- I’m so sorry.”

“Fran?”

“My dog.”

Tommy turns to stare at him slowly, and he watches Sam turn red as he realizes exactly what he said. “You’re petting me like I’m a dog, Sam,” Tommy teases.

“Now, Tommy-”

“I cannot believe you, my boss, would treat me like nothing more than a dog. You’re making me work?? This is animal abuse, Sam, I’m calling the police.”

Sam just shakes his head with a smile, stopping in the middle of pulling his bag over his shoulder to look back at him. “Why couldn’t you have joked around with Wilbur like this, hm?”

“Because I had just woken up and he was trying to give me pity money?” Tommy answers, though it’s more of a question.

“It wasn’t pity money, Tommy. Scholarships are rewards for academic excellence. They’re meant to make your life a little bit easier.” Sam’s trying to be gentle, maybe a little persuasive, but Tommy doesn’t need that. He doesn’t need anything.

“My life is fine.”

“You’re an eighteen-year-old working seventy-two hours a week *willingly* while also attending class full time. I don’t even know how you manage to afford your own place, Tommy. A scholarship to LMU would pay for your classes *and* a place to live.”

Tommy’s throat burns and his hands are shaking, but when he speaks, his voice is steady. “I’m really okay, Sam. Thanks for your concern, though.”

“Just… think about it, okay?” Sam pleads, and Tommy gives him a fluid nod before Sam is clocking out and leaving.

He lets his head thump onto the desk, smacking into the bruise above his eyebrow so sharply it makes him see stars. He bites down on his tongue and tries to focus on simply being here in the now- not somewhere else. He’s working at a coffee shop owned by a man with green hair and prominent Dad Energy. He lives alone in his apartment that’s meant for a family of three. He goes to school and he doesn’t sleep very often, and he’s okay. He is.

The shop's phone rings, and Tommy fumbles for it to answer. "Neutral Grounds, Tommy speaking. How can I help you?"

"Could you get a dozen everything bagels ready for me to pick up in about twenty minutes?" The voice on the other end asks, echoing traffic beeping around them.

"Sure thing, can I get a name for that?"

"Dream."

Tommy pauses in writing down the order for just a moment before rolling his eyes and continuing. He hangs up with a quiet goodbye and then slips into the kitchen to get started on the bagels.

That's the thing about Neutral Grounds, it's *literally* neutral ground. It's the only coffee shop that's open 24/7 in the lower districts, so everyone comes here. *Everyone*. Sam had originally called it 'Fran's' after his dog, Tommy now knows, but after the Warden had dubbed the place a neutral ground, Sam had renamed it. Just to kind of drive the point home, and all that.

Dream is one of the big villains right now. Tommy's already served his left-hand man a coffee with a concerning amount of espresso in it, just as he served cupcakes to Team Rocket. He wonders if the vigilantes can get copy-right claimed. That'd be funny. He doubts Dream himself will actually show up in the shop to pick up bagels, but he's used to this by now.

The bell rings and Tommy backs out of the kitchen with a little box of twelve bagels, and he turns to come face-to-face with Dream. Possibly. It could also be one of his goons; Tommy thinks they all wear the smiley mask.

"Dream?" He asks.

“That’s me,” Possibly Dream answers. “You got my bagels?”

“Yeah, man. That’ll be \$12.36.”

Possibly Dream hands him the money as Tommy slides his box of bagels across the counter, but he doesn’t leave. Tommy pauses in putting the cash in the register to raise an eyebrow, flinching when he accidentally raises his injured one.

“What happened to your face?”

“Why do you care?”

“You’re Sam’s employee,” Possibly Dream states like it’s obvious. “Everyone knows not to touch you guys; you’ve got immunity.”

Oh. Considering he just got mugged earlier, Tommy did not know that. “I got mugged right over there,” he says, gesturing across the street where he’d been standing. “Prick whacked me with his gun a little too hard.”

“You got *mugged*?” Possibly Dream shouts, disturbing one of the poor college students trying to leech off the free wifi in the shop. She glares at his back before going back to her textbook. “What kind of idiot mugs one of Sam’s employees *in front* of Sam’s shop?”

“That one, apparently.” Tommy’s successfully rung him up, so now he’s just waiting for this guy to leave. He just wants to go get to work on his homework again, maybe steal a cookie from the display.

“What’d he look like?” Possibly Dream asks. His voice is distorted with the voice changer already, but Tommy’s not one to judge. He’s just doing his job.

“He had a mask on, I don’t know. Ran off down the street and turned left after stealing my fucking smoothie coupon like an asshole.”

Possibly Dream hums as he tucks the box under his arm, and he slips a ten into the tip jar. Oh my. “Thanks, Tommy. Have a good night.”

Tommy looks from the tip jar to the door and then the girl at the booth, and she shrugs at him. She might be in his creative writing class, now that he thinks about it.

“Don’t look at me, man,” she scoffs. “I come here because they do. They’re not gonna blow up their favorite coffee place.”

“Oh shit, yeah, didn’t Maggie’s Shop get blown up over in the East End?” Another student asks, pulling their headphones down.

“*What?!*” The final patron in the shop at the moment exclaims, an old man with very little hair. “I loved Maggie’s Shop. He always made such nice cupcakes.”

Tommy leaves the three of them to their conversation, but he keeps the door to the backroom open so he can hear them if they need him or if the door opens. The little window above the desk is open as well, rustling through his hair and nudging his papers around with a smoggy sort of breeze as he works through his homework. They’re only in the beginning of the semester, so there isn’t as much of it as there could be.

The hours slink by, and Tommy decides to give his homework a rest when there aren’t any more customers in the shop. He props himself up behind the counter to watch the door, but it’s an early Tuesday morning. The shop isn’t that active on Tuesdays and Thursdays- at least not in the early morning hours.

He’s in the midst of reading the instructions for an origami snail through the cracks of his phone screen when the bell jingles for the front door, and he looks up from his butchered snail napkin to see the same mask from before. Dream. Well, maybe.

Possibly Dream flicks something onto the counter, and when Tommy scoots closer to peer at it, he feels his heart stop. It's the stupid smoothie coupon. It's a little ripped and *maybe* the corner is soaked in blood, but it's the same card with the little doodle of a giraffe on it and everything.

He glances up, and Possibly Dream gives him a thumbs up. Tommy hesitantly gives one back, and then Possibly Dream is leaving just as quickly as he'd come inside, shoes squeaking on the tile floor and little droplets of blood dripping off the end of his hoodie.

....right.

Maybe having immunity in this city won't be so bad.

# Rich Men Are SHIT

## Chapter Summary

Except... except Sam looks so *happy to see him*. And he brought Fran. How is Tommy supposed to cause an exceeding number of problems when there's a cute dog here?

*The answer is he's not, so he tucks the dumb letter back into his bag and gives Sam his best smile. If that prick Wilbur comes in, he'll yell at him instead.*

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Tommy's squatting on the floor to wipe up the drops of blood Possibly Dream left behind when the front door's bell tingles again. Thick, armored boots come to a stop in his peripheral alongside what appears to be a long stick, and Tommy drops his head between his knees.

He must look awfully suspicious.

"Vinegar?" the Warden asks, and when Tommy looks up at him, one of his eyebrows is raised.

"They might look for bleach," Tommy answers meekly, and then he waddles away still crouched. It's the element of surprise- the Warden won't expect him to waddle away like that.

See- the Warden isn't really a *hero*, per se. The heroes are all pussies with a no-kill rule, but the Warden doesn't have that rule. If he has to kill someone, he'll do it no questions asked. Tommy's pretty sure he saw on the news a couple of months ago that the Warden took a vigilante's arm. However, he also thinks he saw the Warden and said vigilante kissing on a rooftop on his way home last week, so he doesn't really know.

He's an anti-hero, technically. Tommy just thinks he's cool.

“Tommy,” the Warden drawls, and hoo boy, Tommy forgot he knew his name. “Why are you cleaning blood off of Sam’s floor?”

Tommy dumps the napkins he’d used to clean up the blood in the trashcan and hops back onto his chair, frowning down at his origami snails once more. Such sad excuses for gastropods. He learned that word in his science class last week-

“Tommy?”

Oh, right.

“You know that Dream guy?” He asks him. “Well, he came in here to pick up bagels, right? And when he came in here he saw my face -please don’t ask about my face- and he was all ‘what happened?’ and I said, ‘Haha, I got mugged’ and I told him where the guy went, right?” The Warden just continues to watch him, yellow iris a little spooky against black sclera. “So anyway, Possibly Dream came back a couple of hours later covered in blood, but he brought me my smoothie coupon back. That’s what the guy stole.”

The Warden blinks at him, leaning on his giant trident with a tilt of his head. “You got robbed over a smoothie coupon.” He sounds exasperated, and Tommy throws his hands above his head.

“That’s what I’m saying! What the fuck about me screams ‘rich and wealthy,’ hm??”

The Warden comes in here most, if not every night that Tommy works. If he’s not coming in, he’s sending in someone else. Tommy has met an unnaturally tall hero who looked like a golden shark, a vigilante that could turn into a cat, and another vigilante who Tommy actually really liked. That one’s name had been the Medic, and he’s pretty sure the Medic was the one he saw kissing the Warden.

There’s a lot of ‘The Something’ names in this fucking city. The Warden. The Medic. The Blade. The Ghost. Tommy’s getting a little sick of the lack of originality in this place, but he’s also far too tired to really care all that much.



“You know,” Tommy lulls, propping his head in one of his hands while he taps a pattern into his failed snails. “I’m pretty sure Sam is some kind of fanboy of yours.”

“Oh?” The Warden asks, and he sounds like he’s smiling. Tommy can’t really see him with the whole gasmask thing going on. “Why do you say that?”

“He’s got his hair all green like yours.”

The Warden tilts his head with a hum, but he doesn’t say anything else about it. He asks for a small latte instead, and Tommy scurries to make it for him while the Warden lingers in the front room. They won’t get any customers while he’s out there, so Tommy tries his best to hurry him along. Neutral Grounds does ridiculously well anyway, but still.

Tommy takes up his seat behind the counter and spreads his math textbook out in front of him after the Warden leaves. He really doesn’t comprehend anything the book says to him, but it’s kind of fun to watch the numbers and letters swim around on the page as his mind drifts. He has to catch his head from falling a few times, though he puts a stop to that problem by turning the TV in the corner on.

Why in fuck’s name is there news coverage of a bank robbery at 3:30 in the morning?

No, you know what? That’s not Tommy’s problem. He’s just going to work his funky little job, serve his funky little coffees, and then he’s going to walk his funky little ass home in an hour and a half. People who work early shifts will be coming in pretty soon, as will the person he’s supposed to swap with.

Clara’s a nice lady, she works from about 4:00am to noon. Sam usually comes in around eleven and leaves at seven, and then Tommy gets the place to himself at night. It’s a nice system. He likes it.

The bell jingles *again* and Tommy looks up at the door, squinting as he tries to get his eyes to refocus. He’d drifted further than he thought, then.

“Neutral Grounds,” Tommy says, and he sounds tired even to his own ears. “What can I get you?”

The guy who’s just come in is a hero, one of the actual ‘heroey heroes’. The not killing ones. Lame. He’s called, uh... his hero name is... yeah, Tommy’s drawing a blank with this one.

“Can I get a Venti Iced Brown Sugar Oat Milk Shaken Espresso?” Unnamed Hero Man asks, swinging his trenchcoat around himself like a blanket as he sits on one of the barstools.

Tommy just blinks at the guy, feeling his brain slowly turning to mush as he tries to remember everything that was just said to him. He knows he knows those words, and he also knows that were he more awake, he would be able to remember what they mean, but after Unnamed Hero Man said them so fast, his brain isn’t getting anywhere.

“In English?” Tommy asks, still holding his little pen and notepad. Unnamed Hero Man smiles at him in a way that probably isn’t real, but Tommy doesn’t care.

“Biggest cup of cold coffee with brown sugar, oat milk, and lots of espresso.”

“Oh,” Tommy murmurs. “Sorry, big man. I’m really tired. Can I get a name for it?”

“Phantom,” Now-Named Hero Man says, and oh! Yeah, Tommy remembers this guy. He’d seen him on the news at some point. Maybe earlier tonight? Was he the one stopping the bank robbery? “Yeah, I stopped the robbery.”

Wasn’t that on the other side of town, though? How’d he get over here so fast? It’s not even four yet, Clara won’t be here for *ages*.

Had Tommy asked about the robbery out loud?

“Are you good, kid?” Phantom asks, head tilting to the side. “You seem kind of out of it.”

Tommy waves him away, sliding off his chair and slipping into the kitchen. “I’m good. Just a little tired is all, my nap earlier was shit.” It’s not really his fault; Sunday is his free day, but he’d been plagued by nightmares of clean walls and snapping bones, so sleeping hadn’t ended up happening. He’d spent a lot of his sleeping time on Saturday doing homework, and it just overall was not going well.

He puts together Phantom’s order mechanically, bringing it back out to him with little fanfare and taking care of the cash he pays with. Phantom continues to sit at the counter and sip on his coffee while Tommy sits back in his own chair, staring in the general direction of his textbook.

His eyes keep closing.

“What’s your name?” Phantom asks him, and Tommy peels his head out of his hands to squint at him. The other man, with wild brown curls swaying around while he types on his phone, doesn’t pay Tommy much mind.

“Tommy,” he answers.

“Full name?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know, weatherboy.”

Phantom looks up from his phone with a little frown, and the white of his domino mask squints at Tommy in displeasure. Hehe.

“My powers don’t even have anything to do with the weather,” Phantom says. He sounds like he’s talking to a child, which Tommy most certainly is not. “When do you get off work?”

It's Tommy's turn to squint now, frowning petulantly as he abandons any pretense of looking at his textbook. "Why do you care? Is this like- is this like how when creepy men come ask about a teenager's schedule? You're supposed to be a hero, Phantom. I'm disappointed."

Phantom looks a little peeved, but his frown dissipates when Tommy starts giggling to himself. He snorts a laugh of his own, and then they both look up when the bell jingles.

"Clara!" Tommy exclaims. His voice comes out way softer than it was supposed to, but to each their own. Tommy can't be bothered. "You're here!"

"And you're exhausted," Clara retorts, not even sparing Phantom a glance. She comes around the counter and starts tugging Tommy's textbooks away from him, closing them up with napkins as place-markers and then dumping them into his bookbag. She places a warm hand on his shoulder when she's done, and Tommy kind of wants to cry.

"You should go home," she tells him gently, patting him once as she drops his backpack on the counter. "Sam won't be mad if you take off an hour early. He'll probably be grateful, honestly."

Tommy doesn't whine when he complains that, no, he does not need to go home because he's completely fine. He's going to sit right here at the counter, and he's going to do his job until it's 5am, and then he's going to go home and pass out.

Clara gives him a look, and she makes a face at Phantom who is still sipping on his coffee across from them, and that's the last thing Tommy remembers before he's waking up to the sound of his alarm for class. He doesn't know how he got home, and he isn't even under the covers of his bed. He hasn't changed out of his clothes from yesterday.

...It's not the first time he's forgotten how he got home, and he's sure it won't be the last. It's not unexpected.

What is unexpected, though, is the acceptance letter informing him of his full-ride scholarship to L'Manburg University, courtesy of the one and only Philza Minecraft, that arrives in the mail on Friday. The sight of it makes his blood boil.

He's not some charity case. He doesn't need a rich man's pity, and he'd rather die than accept this shit.

Well- he'd rather die in general, so maybe that isn't the best comparison. Regardless, he is very unhappy about this current turn of events, and he's going to make whoever's responsible for it pay.

He stomps his way through his classes with a permanent snarl on his face, and he breezes through the tests they have for him. It's a Friday- they always give them shitty tests on Friday. He ends up leaving his last class early with how fast he completes his work, and then he storms all the way to work with a scowl marring his face. People jump to get out of his way -which is funny, considering he's an underfed twig who can't throw a punch to save his life- as he thunders down the sidewalk, and when he throws open the front door of Neutral Grounds, he's ready to raise hell.

Except... except Sam looks so *happy* to see him. *And* he brought Fran. How is Tommy supposed to cause an exceeding number of problems when there's a cute dog here?

The answer is he's not, so he tucks the dumb letter back into his bag and gives Sam his best smile. If that prick Wilbur comes in, he'll yell at him instead.

He drops his bag in the backroom and sits on the floor with Fran, laughing softly to himself as Fran kisses his cheeks and his hands. She's a big dog, and if not for the fact that her collar has actually teddy bears on it, he'd probably assume she was meant to be a guard dog.

"How was your week, Tommy?" Sam asks him once he's finished ringing up the customer he was handling. He looks tired, but that could just be the lighting from this angle. Tommy's not one to judge.

"It is what it is, you know? Same as always."

Sam crouches down to pet Fran as well, cooing quietly at her with a dumb little smile on his face. “You get any fun guests in here?” He asks casually. “Some of our nighttime regulars were talking about seeing Dream.”

“It might’ve been Dream. I don’t really know, honestly. He has all his henchmen wear that dumb mask, too.”

“Clara also said she tried to send you home early on Tuesday, but you wouldn’t leave.”

The guilt that creeps up in him at the sight of Sam’s concern is easily outweighed by the annoyance that comes with their care. He doesn’t need anyone to look after him- he’s got this.

“What is she? My mother?” Even the word makes his stomach flip.

“Well, no, but isn’t your mom worried about you? Your dad? You’re only eighteen, kid.”

“I’m not a kid!” It’s a little too defensive for such a simple comment, but he really isn’t a kid. He hasn’t been a kid in months. “And I’m fine. These are my choices, so just let me fuckin’ make ‘em, alright?”

Sam still seems concerned, head tilted and eyes sad, but he nods in agreement. “You are. M’sorry if I overstepped.”

Tommy heaves a sigh and buries his fingers in Fran’s fur, unable to keep looking at the face Sam is making. “It’s fine, big man. Just don’t do it again.”

The bell on the front door tingles with either the departure or arrival of a customer, but Tommy isn’t on the clock yet and Sam seems to be too enraptured with Fran to bother checking. They continue to coo at Fran until the bell on the counter is rung, and then Sam finally lets go of Fran to dust his hands on his apron.

“Sam?” A familiar voice calls, and Tommy abandons Fran to jump up to his full height, jabbing a finger at the new customer.

“*You*,” He sneers at Wilbur, only delighting a little bit when Wilbur’s face goes slack with surprise. “You’re the reason I got that stupid fucking acceptance letter, aren’t you?”

“Excuse me?” Wilbur asks, and Tommy disappears into the back room to yank the large envelope out of his bookbag. He stomps back to the counter -avoiding Fran of course, she is too lovely to be stomped on- and slams the envelope on the counter, jabbing it with a finger.

“This thing. I don’t want a fuckin’ pity scholarship, dickhead.”

Wilbur peers at the envelope’s large ‘**LMU**’ logo before turning back to Tommy, face pinched unhappily. “Then don’t accept it, ‘dickhead’.”

“It shouldn’t have been mailed to me in the first place.”

“You know,” Wilbur says, but he sounds like he’s mocking him. “A scholarship of this magnitude would be pretty helpful for someone like you.”

“Someone like *me*?” Tommy sneers. “I don’t need your fucking pity, and I don’t *want it*. I’m perfectly fucking fine the way I am.”

“But are you happy?” The question seems second nature for Wilbur, just another taunt, but it sends Tommy’s entire world spinning. How is he supposed to be happy? How is he supposed to even know what happiness is when his house is empty and his graveyard is full? How is he supposed to be happy when he has a will written out at eighteen years old?

Sam steps between Tommy and Wilbur, and he pulls the envelope off the counter. “That’s enough, Wilbur,” he snaps, and then he turns to Tommy. “Go cool off in the backroom.”

Tommy snatches the envelope back and storms into the backroom with Fran on his heels, and it takes everything in him not to slam the door. He hates people like Wilbur. He hates Wilbur specifically, but he hates all of them in general. They never did shit for him when he needed it, and now that he's someone else, they want everything to do with him. They think money solves everything but it *doesn't*. He would know.

"He's a prick, Fran," Tommy grumbles to the large dog that has made herself comfortable across his lap. "He's a prick, and I hate 'im. Hope he chokes on his stupid pretzel- who even orders a *cold* pretzel? What the fuck is wrong with him?"

Fran seems to say something like 'I don't know, but I think he's stupid', and Tommy nods to the sound of the door opening.

"You're so right. Praise Fran, the all-knowing queen that she is."

"Please don't turn my dog into a cult leader," Sam says when he pokes his head inside.

"Too late."

Sam just sighs, and he dips through the side door into the kitchen. Tommy knows he only came this way so he could check on him, and he can't decide if he appreciates it or if it infuriates him. Probably both.

"Your dad is an idiot," he whispers to Fran, and he makes her nod back at him. "I'm glad we agree."



# All The Homies Hate Sunday

## Chapter Summary

“Tommy, hey,” the person he’s waiting for breathes, and he looks up from his fries to stare at her. Commissioner Puffy, Chief of the LMPD, sinks into the seat across from him. “How’ve you been?”

“I’ve been alright,” he lies, and he keeps his head down when the waiter comes over to get Puffy’s drink order. “How’ve you been, Captain?”

“I’ve been pretty good, all things considered. Did you get enough to eat?”

"I did, yeah."

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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Today is Sunday. Tommy hates Sundays.

Sundays are the only days where he doesn’t work, and they’re the only day of the week where he usually doesn’t have any homework to keep him distracted. Sometimes he’ll have paced himself well enough to still have some left to do, but his Saturday was spent in a panic over the scholarship. Sam had asked him to think about it, and he’d looked so hopeful, and Tommy is so sick of disappointing people. He’d used his homework as a distraction, and now there isn’t any left.

His professors are probably getting sick of him asking for extra work, so that’s out of the question. Sam has banned him from working on Sundays, too, so that’s another avenue gone. He doesn’t want to go anywhere near his home, and he doesn’t have any friends, so that leaves him here.

Sitting alone in a booth at a diner in West End, picking at a plate of fries. He has no viable excuse for abandoning this meeting, so he simply drags fries through his ketchup and waits.

This is the second stop on his Sunday routine. He has one more after this, but he doesn't know if he'll be able to do it. The last stop always hurts the most- always stings him under his ribcage like the blade of a knife. Fast and sharp, but it lingers. It burns.

"Tommy, hey," the person he's waiting for breathes, and he looks up from his fries to stare at her. Commissioner Puffy, Chief of the LMPD, sinks into the seat across from him. "How've you been?"

"I've been alright," he lies, and he keeps his head down when the waiter comes over to get Puffy's drink order. "How've you been, Captain?"

"I've been pretty good, all things considered. Did you get enough to eat?"

He'd ordered a small fry in a large tray for this exact reason, but he's still been picking at them anyway. His appetite is nothing like it used to be, but that doesn't mean he doesn't have one. He's just- not as hungry anymore.

"I did, yeah."

"That's good." She taps away at her phone for a little while, giving her order to the waiter when he comes back with her water and finally looking at Tommy in full once he's gone. Her gaze isn't judgmental -in fact, there's an almost motherly quality to it- but he still has to force himself not to shrink under her scrutiny.

"What's new?" She asks him gently, and he swallows the bile that'd been trying to gather in his throat. He doesn't want to taste his fries for a second time, thank you.

"I feel like I should be asking you that," he mutters back. Puffy's face goes all sympathetic, and she leans forward on her elbows to get a better look at him.

"You know I'll call you if there're any updates, Tommy," she murmurs. "If you keep thinking about it, you're just gonna stress yourself out."

Tommy shoves his plate away from him and sinks lower into his side of the booth, tucking his chin into the collar of his hoodie. “What else am I supposed to think about, though? They’re just- they got away with it. They’re *still* getting away with it.”

“I know. And I’m sorry, really, I am. I’ve been working with the Angel and his people to see if they can find anything we couldn’t, but we’re coming up empty. No one can find these guys.”

“What more do you want from me?” Tommy finds himself asking, and he has to use all of his self-control not to shout. “I’ve given my statement, I’ve given descriptions, I’ve sat down with too many fucking sketch artists- I’ve drawn their goddamn faces *myself*. You guys have the security footage. What more is there to need?”

“There’s a lot more going on here than just that, Tommy-”

“I don’t fucking care,” he snaps back. “I just want this put to rest so *I* can rest.”

Puffy’s burger comes out, and their conversation comes to a close just long enough for the waiter to refill Tommy’s coke before walking away. He just watches her for a while, and she watches him back. She doesn’t move to touch her food, and he doesn’t get up to leave. Out of the two places he could be right now, this, somehow, is better.

“I know you’re tired,” she says at last, looking away from him to slice her burger in half. “I know you’re sick of this. Hell, Tommy, we’re all working our asses off to find out who’s behind this. The people who did this basically disappeared into thin air, though. We’re trying our best.”

“Try harder.”

It’s mean, and he can tell Puffy is getting frustrated with him, but he doesn’t care. No amount of understanding and working hard is going to untraumatize him. Untraumatize isn’t even a word, and there he goes thinking it. He’s sick of these meetings, he’s sick of working himself

until he drops just to avoid his problems, he's sick of everyone he has to interact with. It's a miracle he hasn't actually *gotten* sick yet.

Puffy eats half of her burger while Tommy scrolls through his phone, eyes burning with each image he sees from his old friends. They all look so happy in their posts, but that's what social media is for. They all look like they've moved on. None of them reach out to him anymore- and maybe that's his fault. He doesn't text back. He's basically a ghost.

"You never did answer my question," Puffy comments after a while, swiping one of her fries through the leftover grease from her burger. "About there being anything new."

"Oh." He'd forgotten about that. "I mean, I guess? I met Wilbur Soot at the cafe, and I guess Sam was telling him about me 'cause now I've got a fuckin' full-ride scholarship to LMU. Housing and everything."

"The one Philza gives out?"

"Mhm."

She hums under her breath, and she wipes her hands on a napkin before tapping her phone screen. Tommy doesn't bother looking at it. "How does that make you feel?" She asks him.

"What are you, my therapist?"

"Well, actually-"

"You went to school for therapy, we know. You tell me every Sunday."

Puffy laughs softly, but her face doesn't lose its seriousness. "What do you think of it, though?"

He shrugs in lieu of answering, going back to moving his fries around on his tray to keep his hands busy. “I don’t really want it, if I’m honest. Rich bitches giving me money I don’t even need- it doesn’t feel fair. Someone else could use that scholarship. Someone who needs it.”

“I mean, Tommy needs it.”

“Thomas doesn’t,” he retorts sullenly, and Puffy’s face turns sympathetic again.

“I could talk to the guy who got you your documents, if you want. See if he can wire it so you can pay for someone else’s tuition and housing and all that.”

Tommy perks up then, physically rising out of his hoodie to stare at her with wide eyes. “You could do that?” He asks, and he leans forward over the table. “That’s an option?”

“I mean, yeah,” she answers, “if you want me to. That way you can take the scholarship without feeling guilty. And technically, it’d still be Mr. Minecraft’s money paying for a student to go to college for free.”

“That’s... that’s good. That’s really good.” If he can do something good for someone, he’ll do it. He doesn’t even have to take the scholarship.

“You’d have to take the scholarship, though.”

Nevermind.

Tommy lets his head thump against the back of the booth as he crosses his arms, glaring at Puffy with a frown. He probably resembles a petulant child. “Why do I need to take it, though? What’s the point?”

“For starters, LMU is a lot safer than your current school. It’s less likely to get shot up, to put it lightly.” Puffy takes another bite of the rest of her burger, glancing around the diner for a moment before looking back at him as she swallows. “It’d get Sam off your back, too.”

He *does* want Sam to stop fretting over him so much. He doesn’t say that no one could hurt him if they tried, not on purpose, but the sentiment is still there. The idea is still firmly implanted in his brain. But- but *Sam*.

“I’d have to cut back on my hours at the cafe, though.”

Puffy snorts into her cup as she sets it down, a little half-smile on her face. “I still don’t know why you’re working there, Tommy. It’s neutral ground, sure, but the area around it isn’t. It’s like you’re *trying* to get yourself killed.”

Tommy laughs alongside her, and he taps his fingers on his thigh under the table. It’s fine. “I like the cafe!” He insists. “Sam brought Fran in on Friday, how can I leave her behind?”

“Fair point,” she relents, “but still. You’d have more coursework at LMU, and it would take up more time than the cafe. You’d still have stuff to do, *and* you’d be able to make friends. Don’t give me that look; I know you don’t have any friends right now.”

“For your information, I met Dream -I think- and he seems like the type of guy I could be friends with.”

“Tommy,” Puffy pleads, “Dream is a villain. He literally killed a guy on Tuesday.”

“Oh, I know.”

“You *know*?”

He nods and eats a couple of his fries, and he bites back his surprise when his stomach doesn't flip. "Yeah. He saw my bruise -which I am hiding under makeup- and he hunted down the guy that mugged me to get me my smoothie coupon back."

Puffy just blinks at him for a moment, burger halfway to her mouth, and then she sighs. "You're telling me Dream, a notorious villain, killed a man because he stole your smoothie coupon."

"And because he hit me in the face with his gun," Tommy finishes. "Apparently, working at Sam's gives me immunity but also protection? It's weird. It's kinda funny, though."

"Tommy, someone *died*."

"Oh. I uh- I hadn't thought about that."

Whoops. Oh well, not his problem. He should probably be a little more sympathetic, but he just genuinely does not care. It's eat or get eaten in this city, and as much as Tommy would like to be eaten, he didn't want to die to some guy trying to rob him in the afternoon. Not right now, at least.

"This is off topic," Puffy finally says, dropping the rest of her burger onto her plate with a heavy sigh. "The scholarship. Do you feel like doing anything with it, or are you going to go back to your apartment and burn it in the alley. Don't say you won't- I know you might."

Okay, maybe he would've, but the prospect of giving someone else free school is a little nicer.

"I'll think about it." He says at last, and Puffy gives him a little smile.

"You have my number when you finally decide."

He drops the ten he'd gotten from the tip jar on Tuesday onto the table, and then he slides his phone into his pocket as he stands. "Take care, Captain," he bids, and she turns to watch him leave.

"You too, Tommy. Be safe."

"I will." He won't.

He ducks out of the diner with a little sigh, and he looks up at the sign above the door. 'Tubburger,' it reads. What a stupid name.

The city screams around him, West End flourishing with pickpockets and rich people alike. Across the street, he watches a kid steal a man's watch straight from his wrist with little more than a gesture. The people out here always amaze him.

A black car pulls up, windows tinted to a probably illegal sense, and Tommy slips into the back. He sinks down into the seat after he's buckled his seatbelt, and the driver turns to look over his shoulder with a little frown on his face.

"Where to?" He asks kindly, and Tommy resists the urge to cry. He hates it here.

"Home."

He hates Sundays.

## Chapter End Notes

me: idk when im gonna update this again



also me: double updates like 24 hours later

the mystery,,,, it is there,,,,, what is it? idk bro. all i know is you're not gonna say shit if you saw a spelling error

# A Little Baby

## Chapter Summary

Beanie Man snorts into his cup, and Sam lights up all over again. “Tommy, this is my son, Quackity. Quackity, this is that kid I was telling you about, Tommy.”

“Not your son.”

“Not a kid.”

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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“You’re sure you want him rooming with Ranboo?” Wilbur asks, a skeptical furrow to his brow as he glances between Sam and the teenager asleep on his homework in the back room. “You don’t even know if he’s going to accept the scholarship.”

“Wilbur, you’ve *seen* the way he’s living. You took him home- you’ve been in his apartment,” Sam all but pleads. “He’s only been eighteen for a few months. He’s still a kid.”

Wilbur *had* brought him home. He’d been in the tiny studio apartment; he’d nearly stepped on the bed trying to carry Tommy through the window attached to the fire escape. The place is too small for anybody to live in. Phil’s been trying to work on the poverty problem with the business, but it’s hard to make sure the money he donates goes to the right places. Tubbo can only do so much with his hacking.

“He’s younger than all of your brothers, Wil. He’s basically a baby.”

Wilbur snickers into his hand at the notion. He hasn’t known Tommy long, but he has a feeling the kid wouldn’t take kindly to being called a baby.

“Why Ranboo, though? He’s not exactly a master of social interaction, Sam, and there’s a higher chance of Tommy icing him out than letting him in.” It’s a debate they’ve had nearly every day Wilbur has come in here since Tuesday, and it’s Saturday now. Sam wants to have Tommy room with Wilbur’s youngest brother in his off-campus apartment, but Wilbur’s not too sure. Tommy doesn’t exactly seem like the friendly sort.

“That kid in there’s been through something. I- I don’t know what it was, but there’s gotta be a reason he’s like this. What teenager do you know that’s as guarded as he is?”

...Techno was a lot like him when Phil first found him. Little more hostile, but- “...I guess I see your point.” He peers around Sam again, watches the rise and fall of Tommy’s shoulders as he likely drools all over his textbook. He glances back at Sam, but Sam is watching Tommy, too. “You’re sure it’s not just the stress of college and working to pay his rent?”

“I pay Tommy more than enough to take care of his rent. I pay all of my workers way more than I’m ‘supposed to,’” Sam defends. “I don’t know if he’s in trouble with a gang or- or something, but he’s a mess, Wil. I’d have adopted him already if he hadn’t aged out of the system.”

Wilbur had had Tubbo go through Tommy’s records, and according to what little he could find, Tommy was a foster kid that’s been in and out of the system since he was five. He has no known abilities, no hybrid origins, nothing. The records seemed official, but there were too few of them. Tubbo said that’s just what happens to foster kids.

Phil had been trying to adopt another kid back in April, but he turned eighteen and disappeared off the face of the planet. His dad hasn’t stopped beating himself up over it since then, so he gets where Sam is coming from. He does.

“We’ll talk about it more if he actually accepts the scholarship, yeah? And I’m sure Tubbo’s already told Ranboo all about him, so at least he already knows he exists. Just- if he so much as makes Ranboo shed a *tear*, Sam, I’m coming for his life.”

Sam pins him with a flat look, and he finally hands Wilbur his coffee. “We both know only one of us in here has the guts to kill, Wilbur, and it’s not you. If you come after him, the only death you’ll be causing is your own.”

---

The baby in the apartment next door is crying. That's what wakes Tommy up on this disgusting Monday morning an hour before his alarm is supposed to go off. He simply lies there for a while, content in his nest of blankets on the mattress that's basically level with the floor. He'll have to get up soon, he knows that. Shower. Go to class.

But it's raining outside, and he kind of wants to lie here and listen to it.

Today is a bad day. Mentally, at least. It could be a great day for other people, but his head is still foggy from yesterday. His eyes still sting from crying for as long as he had. His dreams had been blissfully empty, just himself and the dark pool he dreams of floating in when he doesn't dream of gunshots and broken glass and screaming. The pool is nice.

The door to the apartment where the baby is crying opens, and the floorboards creak as the woman who lives next door approaches his front door. She's going to ask him to hold her baby while she tries to make the infant its bottle, he knows that. She's a young mother, barely twenty, trying to work and put herself through school and raise a baby. Tommy helps her bring her groceries upstairs every Sunday morning.

He also hides wads of cash around her apartment, but that's his business. He doesn't need it. Sam pays him too much.

The knock comes shortly after the baby's crying reaches its crescendo outside of his door, and Tommy pushes himself out of bed. He nearly stumbles as his vision swims, but with a shake of his head, he's properly balanced and at the front door.

Violet, the nice lady who lives next door, gives him her best apologetic smile even as she looks like she may cry.

"I'm so sorry if I woke you up, Tommy, but could you hold Shroud for me? I burnt my breakfast and I can't finish pumping while I try to clean it up." She's already passing the little baby to him, barely a month old with curly dark hair and rosy cheeks, and Tommy takes him

without fuss. Shroud quiets near instantly when he takes him, and Violet sags with relief. “You’ve got some kind of gift, I swear. He doesn’t even do that for me.”

“What can I say,” he jokes as he follows her into her apartment. “Ladies -and babies, apparently- love me.”

Violet turns her back to him and readjusts her weird breast-pump thing to her body with some kind of strap she’d made, and then she tugs her hoodie back down as she goes to clean the food she’d burnt. Tommy sinks down on the edge of her bed and strokes delicately along Shroud’s eyebrow, offering the baby a little smile when he peers up at him with dark eyes.

He doesn’t know a lot about Shroud’s dad, nor does he know much about Violet. He’s not around and she’s doing the best she can for herself and her baby, but she still needs help sometimes. That’s one of the reasons he’s so hesitant to move- he doesn’t want to leave her here without help.

...but if Tommy accepts the LMU scholarship, he can give one to someone else. He can pay for housing, groceries, *anything*. He’s responsible for setting the parameters for what the scholarship would cover.

“Have you heard of that Philza Minecraft guy?” He asks her, accepting the bottle she hands him and readjusting Shroud so he can feed him. “The business guy?”

“I think everyone’s heard of him,” Violet answers. “He’s the richest guy on the east coast, and apparently he’s ‘The World’s Most Loving Husband’ according to the news channels.”

Tommy did not know that specific fact, but it makes sense. “He also gives out scholarships to LMU.”

Violet snorts and sprays the counter down with bleach as she starts wiping it. “That’s great, Tommy.”

“Would you...” he hesitates, using the edge of his sleeve to wipe some of the milk Shroud spilled on his own little cheeks. “If you got a scholarship there, do you think you’d go?”

“They’d have to cover literally all of my expenses, and I don’t think I’ve ever heard of a scholarship that pays for daycare. I know LMU is prestigious as all shit, but I don’t think they consider their students *that* much.”

Daycare, right. Tommy adds that to the mental list of things the scholarship will have to cover. He’ll have to find an apartment for her to live in, furnish it, find a good daycare. There are daycares on campus, aren’t there? He’ll have to check.

Violet unhooks her breast pump and sets the little bottle in the fridge, and then she turns back to him with a soft smile. “I can take him now, thank you. I’m so sorry I keep having to have you help me.”

“It’s alright, really,” he murmurs, passing Shroud back to his mother and then handing her the bottle as well. “I like helping.” It gives him something to do.

“I’ll see you next time, yeah?”

“Yeah.”

He shuts her door behind himself and then slips into his own apartment, locking the door and falling face-first onto his bed. His phone smacks him directly on his still healing bruise, and he rolls over with a groan of pain as he clutches his face. Fuck Mondays, fuck his phone -just kidding, he loves Clementine very much- fuck life.

But- helping a single mother? Even if he can’t do what he needs to, he can do that.

He reaches blindly for his phone and frowns at it as it unlocks with a scan of his face, and then he taps through until he reaches Puffy’s number. He hovers over a different number for only a moment, but he’s not *that* sad. He’ll save that for his next breakdown.

*i know who i want to give the scholarship to*

*That's great!*

*Just get in contact with your school about the transfer.*

*your hacker guy will take care of the rest?*

*I've already let him know to keep an eye out for it.*

*You have someone in mind?*

*violet avery*

*shes my neighbor n shes got a kid*

*i want to take care of all her expenses*

*We can talk more later, okay?*

*Be safe today.*

*no*

*>:(*

His alarm for school finally goes off, and Tommy drops his phone -not on his face, take that, Clementine- and rolls off his mattress onto the floor. He shuffles through his pile of clothes that still sit mostly in his duffle bag with a frown, and then he goes to shower and get ready. Campus isn't far from his shitty little apartment building, so he won't be late.

Maybe he'll stop by Neutral Grounds to see Clara, but that's his business. He hasn't seen her since Friday, give him a break.

He uses the fire escape to leave instead of the front door because it means he gets to see the black cat and her kitten who live in the alleyway, and he crouches to offer them two cans of wet cat food as he goes to leave. They're sweet little things, and though he isn't the biggest fan of cats, he'd rather not leave them out here to starve. Not when one of them is a baby, anyway.

And if he leaves his window open a crack on the off chance they want to take shelter in his house from the rain, that is, once again, his business. He's not cruel. He can dislike cats without actively making their lives worse.

He sits through his first class in silence like he always does, but the girl from the cafe who saw Dream with him on Tuesday nods from across the room, so he nods back. His second class is spent in similar silence, and then he has a break before his third where he rushes to the admissions office. The letter said to drop it off here should he accept it, and that's what he'll do.

"Tommy Danger?" The old lady at the desk asks as she reads over the letter. The sound of his last name still makes him laugh; whoever chose it has a sense of humor. "Oh, I'm so glad you're accepting! This will be great for you. Do you want to finish out the week here, or would you prefer to transfer tomorrow?"

Violet might need him this week. He also *really* doesn't actually want to transfer, so the longer he can put it off, the better.

"We can do next week if that's alright," Tommy answers, and the lady gives him a smile. He should really learn her name. He won't, but he should.

"That's wonderful, sweetheart. I just need you to sign a few things and then you're good to go."



He fills out his paperwork with barely enough time to run to his next class, but he makes it. He texts aggressively with Puffy throughout the period, though, because she said later and it's technically later. He wants Violet's scholarship secured or he's going to have a meltdown.

He won't have one -probably- but it's a nice threat. Puffy promises her hacker guy is working on getting it done, and Tommy sends her a list of what he wants the money to cover. Housing, groceries, daycare, transportation if necessary. Anything they'd need, he wants to cover it.

When all of his classes are over, Tommy trudges his way to the cafe. He doesn't want to deal with customers today, and he especially doesn't want to deal with Wilbur if the prick decides to come in, but he *does* want to see Sam. Sam will be proud of him. Hopefully.

Fran isn't here today, but Sam usually only brings her in on Fridays, anyway. Wilbur, however, is tapping away at his laptop on one of the barstool seats with another guy in a beanie next to him. Tommy's never seen that guy before, but he hasn't seen a lot of people before.

"Tommy!" Sam calls the moment he steps out of the kitchen, face lighting up at the sight of him. "How was your weekend? How was school? I know you spent most of Saturday here."

His weekend was shit, but he's not going to say that.

"It was fine, Sam. I accepted the scholarship and everything."

"You did?" Sam and Wilbur ask at the same time, and the unnamed beanie-wearing man snickers into his cup.

"Unfortunately."

Wilbur turns in his chair to face him, laptop long forgotten. "I thought you didn't like accepting 'pity money.'"

He doesn't, and he'd really like to shove his shoe down Wilbur's throat, but now is not the time. Maybe another time. If Dream comes back in, he can tell him Wilbur made him cry. See what that does.

Nah. Probably not a good idea.

"I talked to someone about it, and they convinced me. I still fucking hate you though, prick."

Beanie Man snorts into his cup, and Sam lights up all over again. "Tommy, this is my son, Quackity. Quackity, this is that kid I was telling you about, Tommy."

"Not your son."

"Not a kid."

Sam just smiles fondly at the both of them, eyes soft and kind. Tommy understands why he seems so fatherly now, considering he has a son(?) and all. Quackity turns to face him and he offers his hand, and Tommy shakes it. His grip isn't all that firm, more casual than anything else, but his smile is something else. Calculated, maybe.

Listen, Tommy slept a decent amount last night. Sue him for actually being able to notice things.

"It's nice to finally meet you, Tommy. Sam won't shut up about you."

"What can I say, I'm kind of amazing."

"You're not," Wilbur comments, and Tommy kicks his shin. Wilbur kicks him in the thigh in retaliation, but he doesn't seem too mad. That's always good.

They fall into small talk for a while, Sam briefly dipping from the conversation every now and again to serve a customer that comes in, and then Quackity reaches for the remote to the television in the corner.

“They’re talking about that kid again,” he mutters, and Tommy’s light banter with Wilbur ceases.

*“There’s still no news on the whereabouts of Thomas Kraken, nor that of his parents’ murderers. The company, having been sold to our own billionaire Philza Minecraft, seems to be flourishing under his guidance. The case of Thomas is a sad one. Many speculate that after the death of his parents, he took his own life in L’Manburg’s harbor. Other sources say-”*

“Please turn it off,” Wilbur hisses, steely brown gaze stuck firmly on the picture of Thomas the news channel had been showing. His hair is long, and he looks happy. His parents aren’t in that picture. “I said fucking turn it *off*, Quackity.”

“Alright, alright, man. Fuck. I’ll turn it off.” The TV shuts off with a little click, and Quackity turns to face Wilbur. “What’s your deal?”

Wilbur leans against the counter on his elbows, rubbing at his temples with two fingers. He seems stressed. Tommy’s perfectly fine- happily floating back in that dark pool as he observes his own body from outside. It’s nice.

“My dad was supposed to adopt him after all that shit happened,” Wilbur mutters, low enough that Tommy gets the feeling he’s not supposed to hear. “But he turned eighteen and fucking disappeared. I’d rather not think he killed himself; my dad couldn’t handle it. He probably saw that broadcast, *shit*. Let me call Techno- I just- goddamnit.”

Wilbur collects his things and disappears out the front door with his phone pressed to his ear, a crumpled five-dollar bill all that’s left in his place. Quackity turns to Tommy slowly, and all Tommy can do is shrug.

Oh. Well. He knows why he felt like he'd seen Wilbur before.

## Chapter End Notes

tada!! big reveal!! i think. also i definitely know what pacing is. mhm. i certainly do.

will i ever update the tags all the way? i don't know and neither do you ahaha

# MTV Welcome To My Crib

## Chapter Summary

"You're a good kid, Tommy."

"Not a kid."

"I know."

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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So. Tommy's moving in with his new roommate "Ranboob" today. At least, he's *supposed* to be moving in with Ranboob today. He really doesn't have a lot of belongings, so he doesn't know why Sam is insisting on driving all the way out here to help him move, but it's whatever.

His clothes are in their duffel bag, and the blankets and pillows from his bed are all shoved down into a box to cushion the meager items of dishware he has. That's genuinely all that was in his apartment. He really didn't eat a lot, and when he wanted something cooked, he could just go home. He didn't really do that, but that's not important.

What's important is that this life -Tommy's life- fits in a cardboard box, a duffel bag, and a bookbag. It feels like that's all he is anymore. A box and two bags. Full yet somehow empty, utterly meaningless and unneeded.

Something falls next door, and Tommy jolts. He's supposed to be focusing on moving today, but he's also helping Violet move. She'd nearly broken down his door Tuesday morning in her excitement about receiving an email about getting a full-ride scholarship to LMU that covered all of her expenses. She'd been worried about moving by herself, but Tommy'd told her he had a friend coming to help him move there, too, so she could just come along.

Maybe he hadn't told Sam, but it's Sam's fault for thinking he'd be bringing his mattress. He's going to leave it here for whoever moves in or whoever decides to squat in the building. They need it more than he does.

Similarly, Violet doesn't have a lot of things to bring. The mysterious scholarship is paying to buy her new furniture, a new laptop, new everything. All she really needs help with are the boxes of pictures, clothes, and sentimental items. One of those items is Shroud's crib- apparently, it'd been her own when she was born, and she wants to keep it.

"You need any help in there?" He calls through her front door, offering his best smile when Violet swings the door open. Shroud is sleeping in his car seat on the kitchen table, and Violet's hair is everywhere.

"Yes! You- you're taking off the left side of the crib, I'm doing the right. Break it and you die."

"Yes ma'am," he snickers, and he sits down on the left side of the crib with the screwdriver she offers him. It's really not that hard to take apart, all things considered, and they work on pulling the back off as well. Maybe it falls on Tommy's ankle when she accidentally lets it go, but that's not important. He can still walk just fine. When it's all said and done, Violet straps it together with little velcro strips and a smile on her face.

She leans back against the wall as Tommy checks the time, and he checks his messages, too. Sam says he'll be there in a few minutes, which is perfect timing in Tommy's ever-humble opinion. Violet leans forward suddenly, wrapping a hand around his -minorly injured- ankle and giving it a little squeeze.

"Dude," she breathes, and Tommy does his best to laugh.

"Dude," he agrees.

"I just- I can't believe I got a fucking scholarship to LMU! *And* they cover daycare. It's like- it's like I'm getting a whole new *life*, Tommy. I'm going to get a degree that people will actually take seriously, and it's going to make growing up so much easier for Shroud." She

laughs a little in disbelief, leaning back against the wall again and pulling her knees to her chest. “I was so scared he was going to have to grow up in a place like this. I was doing the best I could, but it wasn’t enough. And now- and now it *will* be enough. *I’ll* be enough. I just- holy shit, dude.”

He just smiles at her, massaging around his ankle while he keeps an ear out for his phone. His ringer is on only this once, and only because he’s not the only one involved right now. If he were moving on his own- well. He probably wouldn’t have moved at all if he was only doing it for himself.

His phone dings, and a grin breaks out on Violet’s face.

“That’ll be Sam,” he tells her, pushing himself to his feet and shaking out his ankle as discreetly as he can. “I’ll go bring my stuff down and then I’ll bring him up here to help with your stuff.”

“I’m so excited,” she laughs, “thank you so much. I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

He doesn’t want to think about that, so he wanders back into his apartment and shoulders his bags, balancing the box as safely as possible before making his way downstairs. Sam nearly falls out of the little four-door pickup he’d driven to try and get to Tommy, and he takes the box from his hands.

“How’re you doin, Tommy? Are you excited?”

“I am.” He most certainly is not.

“I’m so glad.” Sam looks so relieved, green hair pinned under the dadliest hat Tommy has ever seen, so he doesn’t say anything else. He just lets Sam load his box into the bed of the truck, and then he drops his duffel back there as well.

“Don’t you want to put that in the back?” Sam asks him, brows furrowed as he glances between Tommy and his bag. “We have to put furniture in the bed.”

Tommy forces himself to laugh, only a little guilty but not really, and he drops his book bag into the floor of the passenger’s side. “So I might not’ve been super honest about the whole moving thing,” he starts, offering an only slightly sheepish smile when Sam pins him with a look. “You see, my neighbor *also* got a scholarship, and it’s just her and her baby, so I figured we could help them move, too. Also, you’re not allowed to say no.”

Sam’s pinched expression slowly spreads into a grin, and he ruffles Tommy’s hair with a little smile. “You’re such a good kid, Tommy.”

“Not a kid.”

“I know,” Sam sighs, and then Tommy starts to lead him into the building toward Violet’s apartment. He doesn’t think about what Sam said, and he doesn’t think about the people he knows. Someone got murdered because of him. They probably would’ve gotten murdered regardless, but still. That doesn’t really make him a good person, now does it?

Violet smiles at the both of them when they enter, a little cloth thrown over her shoulder and Shroud nursing in her arms. She offers Sam her unoccupied hand, and she blushes a little when he shakes it. Uh oh.

“You must be Sam. I’m Violet, thank you so much for helping me move.”

“Anytime,” Sam laughs, all smiles, and he glances around the little apartment. “Is there something you want us to take down first?”

Violet points at the crib and it’s mattress before gesturing to a couple of the boxes that have their clothes in them. “Could you do the crib first? And please be careful with it, it’s really important. I’m sorry I can’t help.”



“No, no, don’t be sorry. Someone’s gotta stay with your little one, hm?” Sam picks up like, all of the crib in one move, which- what? And Tommy shares a look with Violet. He grabs one of the bigger boxes of her clothes -curse his noodle arms and lack of appetite, he’s going to pass out from this- and watches Sam walk the crib out the door.

“I’m pretty sure he’s got a boyfriend,” Tommy says as he passes Violet, and she heaves a dramatic sigh.

“I wasn’t interested like that, Tommy, jeez. I just think he’s cute- in like a dad sort of way.”

“Gross.”

Tommy carries his box down the stairs and out to the truck, sliding it on one side while Sam secures the crib on the other side. He goes to head back inside, but Sam stops him with a clearing of his throat.

“You known Violet for long?”

“Not really,” Tommy answers with a half-shrug, shuffling back over to hold the crib up while Sam straps it down. “I moved here back in like- April, maybe? Early May? And I met her then. I help her bring her groceries up every Sunday.”

“That’s sweet of you, Tommy.”

Tommy just rolls his eyes, moving away from the truck to jog back up the stairs. “It’s not about being sweet, Sam. She needed my help and I gave it to her.”

When he turns back around, Sam is just watching him with a look Tommy can’t decipher on his face. His ability to read people is gone today; he’d spent too long stressing about moving to get any sleep.

“You’re a good kid.”

“Not a kid.”

“I know.”

They collect the rest of Violet’s things and deposit them in the truck, and Tommy drops off his keys at the weird little front office. It’s not really an office, and there’s only ever someone in it on the day they collect the rent, but that’s where they want the keys left. He hangs around the entrance while Violet drops off her keys, too, and then they walk to the truck together.

Look. Tommy’s not really an intimidating figure, but there’s a guy on the first floor who thinks he’s entitled to Violet and her time. The least he could do is distract the guy while Violet went out to the truck if he were to show his face- it’s not like he’d be able to hit him anyway.

Violet buckles Shroud’s car seat into the back, and she slides in beside him while Tommy and Sam climb into the front. Sam puts the truck in gear, and just like that, the crumbling apartment building is left in the dust. It’s strange to think about. He’d been basically hiding in that little place for the better part of five months now, and suddenly it’s over. He’ll never go back there again.

“Are you kids excited?” Sam asks them, and Tommy chokes on the sip of coke that’d been in his mouth. “What? What’s wrong? Are you okay?”

“Sam,” Tommy coughs, “why are you such a dad?”

“Are you kids excited?” Violet mocks from the backseat, and Tommy snickers into his hand. “Why yes, father, we are so excited to go to college and incur debt. It’s all we’ve ever wanted in life.”

Sam turns onto a busier street, changing lanes to get ready to merge onto the highway. “In my defense, neither of you are actually going into debt. You’re allowed to be excited.”

Tommy isn’t excited about it, is the thing. He would’ve been if he was paying his own way into college, or if he even wanted to actually *go* to LMU, but he doesn’t. He doesn’t really want to do anything this week. It’s a bad week. Sam took the day off today to help him move, and he gave Tommy the day off, obviously, which means he has nothing to do before tomorrow. Before Sunday.

He doesn’t mean to fall asleep, but listening to Sam talk quietly with Violet convinces his brain it’s a good idea to take a nap. He doesn’t wake up until the door disappears from against the side of his head, and then he’s flailing awake and directly into Sam.

“Easy, kid, easy,” Sam soothes, strong hands on Tommy’s shoulders as he gathers his bearings. “You’re all good. You can go back to sleep.”

Tommy can *not* go back to sleep, thank you. He blinks rapidly and pushes off of Sam’s chest, glancing around the parking lot they’re now sitting in. A building stands tall in front of them, five stories high and incredibly long. The apartment building. They were moving him and Violet and Shroud, right. Where is-

He turns sharply to look at the backseat, but it’s empty. They’re not there.

“I moved Violet in while you were sleeping, Tommy, it’s okay. They’re fine.” Sam placates gently, and he steps back from the door when Tommy unbuckles his seatbelt and stumbles out. He catches Tommy when he falls, and he rights him quickly with hands once more on his shoulders. “Breathe, Tommy. You’re okay. I’ve got you.”

Tommy doesn’t *need* to be gotten. He’s fine. He’s- no one can help him but himself. He’s *fine*.

“Thanks,” he mutters, jerking away from Sam and righting himself on his own. He’s fine. “Sorry, big man. Didn’t sleep well last night.”

“You alright?” Sam asks him gently, too gently, Tommy doesn’t need gentle, and he looks at him with that fucking dad look again. Tommy doesn’t need a dad- he *has* a dad. “Why couldn’t you sleep?”

Tommy gestures vaguely at the building ahead of them, swinging his bookbag over his shoulder with a grimace. “Just- I don’ know. Stressed about moving. Didn’t think I’d be doing it again so soon.”

Sam is all kind, understanding eyes, and Tommy kind of hates him for it. “Come on, I’ll walk you upstairs. One of Ranboo’s older brothers, Techno, is up there. I think he wants to try and intimidate you.”

“It’s not like I’m some new boyfriend being brought home,” Tommy complains quietly, kicking a loose rock out of place before following Sam inside to the elevator. *Elevator*. There are stairs inside the building, and it looks like some of the apartments have fire escapes, but they’re taking an *elevator*. It makes Tommy feel kind of sick.

“It’s not even that,” Sam answers, “they’re all just really protective of Ranboo. He’s the youngest, and he’s not the best socially, so please be nice to him. I don’t want Wilbur showing up in my cafe to complain.”

“No promises.”

“*Tommy.*”

“What?”

Sam pins him with another look as the elevator dings upward to the top floor. “Just- please behave, alright? Please?”

“Fine.” Anything for Sam.

They come out on the top floor, and Sam leads the way to one of the apartments at the end of the hall. It’s one of the ones with a fire escape if Tommy remembers correctly. He hopes it is- they always have access to the roof.

Sam knocks on the door once, apartment 555, and then he twists the knob and steps inside. Tommy follows shortly behind him.

Both of the men inside are tall- taller than he is. He doesn’t know which is which. One of them has long pink hair that sits in a thick braid over his shoulder, the other’s hair is half black and half white. Pink Hair has brown eyes, and Half-n-Half’s eyes are covered by sunglasses. Pricks.

Sam had mentioned on Thursday that these guys were both Wilbur’s younger brothers. Being a prick must run in the family.

“Tommy, this is Ranboo.” Sam gestures to Half-n-Half, and then he gestures to Pink Hair. “This is Technoblade.”

“What kind of a fucking name is ‘Technoblade’?” Tommy blurts, and then he cringes. Whoops.

“Ignore him,” Sam mutters. “He just woke up.”

Technoblade just raises an uninterested eyebrow, expression carefully blank. “You sure this kid is old enough for college, Sam? Never seen an eighteen-year-old who needs naps.”

“Techno,” Sam snaps, and Ranboo somehow curls into himself. Tommy is far too tired for this. He has to get ready for tomorrow, and he really just wants to sleep through all of this.

“C’mere, Tommy,” Technoblade says, gesturing toward a little hallway on the right side of the living room. “I’ll show you your room.”

It sounds like a trap, but Tommy is -surprise!- still too tired for this. He gives Sam a half-assed thumbs up, nods at Ranboo, and then follows Technoblade into the bedroom. It has a fire escape, which is nice. Considering it's an apartment in the corner of the building, Ranboo's bedroom might have one, too.

The bed's a queen, and it's in a frame. Tommy's old mattress was an old twin that laid directly on the floor. There's a large chest of drawers in one corner and a desk in the other. Tommy will probably move the bed so it's in the corner opposite the fire escape. His little box of blankets and his duffel bag look strange just sitting on the bed.

Behind him, Technoblade shuts the door. Definitely a trap.

“You only get one chance at this,” Technoblade drawls. “You upset my brother, no one will find your body.”

“You couldn't hurt me if you tried,” Tommy states, and he's not even lying. It probably seems like some kind of taunt, and maybe it is, but it's also a fact.

Technoblade regards him with a quiet kind of displeasure, and then he grunts. He opens the door to the bedroom and slams it behind himself when he leaves.

What a pleasant guy.

Tommy drops his bag -gently- and pulls his charger out of the front pocket, plugging his phone in before setting it on the nightstand he hadn't noticed before. He slips his shoes off and lets himself fall face-first into this mattress, too, and his throat burns with tears when it feels too soft. He hasn't slept in a bed like this in months.

He kind of hates it.

## Chapter End Notes

i left class early to write chapter six im on a ROLL and i cannot be stopped. still no tag updates tho

hi jem

# Two Strays Become Four Strays

## Chapter Summary

“See, Ranboob-”

“It’s- it’s Ranboo.”

“-whatever. We’re not buying a cat, oh no.”

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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Tommy manages to go four entire days without speaking to his new roommate.

When he wakes up after ‘moving in,’ it’s four in the fucking morning on Sunday and Tommy decides very quickly that he does *not* want to be there. He’d just slept for who even knows how long, and he’s in a place that very much does not feel like his, and he wants out. He wants out *right now*, thank you.

He’s out of that apartment by 4:20 -haha, nice- and down the road in the same clothes he’d worn the day prior. He could call his driver, but the possibility of being brutally murdered is kind of exciting.

It’s safe to say he doesn’t get brutally murdered, and he spends his Sunday in the same places he always spends it. When he gets back to the apartment, a new box of decorations under his arm from Puffy, Ranboo’s box fan is on in his room. Tommy supposes he uses it to drown out the noise of the city when he sleeps.

On Monday, Tommy’s classes start earlier than Ranboo’s, so he’s out of the apartment before Ranboo is even awake. His shift from Monday night stretches until Tuesday morning, and before he can head back to the apartment, the Warden appears with an *actual* bag of fast food for him. Because he thought Tommy looked *hungry*.



Tommy passes it to a homeless man on his way back. He doesn't need anything from anyone.

He'd gone straight to class on Tuesday, and then he'd taken a nap before work, and then he'd worked again. He'd done the same thing on Wednesday, but at around three in the morning, 404 -Dream's left-hand- had waltzed in, ordered a drink that could probably kill a person, and told Tommy he should head home early. Apparently, they were going to let Arsonist -Dream's right-hand- burn down the police station nearby, and they didn't want Tommy getting caught in the crossfire.

Now, Tommy From A Few Months Ago would have run for his life and called to warn the police. Present Tommy has seen how disgustingly corrupt this specific police station is, so he won't be saying *shit*. Puffy's been working on trying to get them in line, but she has to split her time as commissioner between all of the stations. She's only one woman.

So Tommy gives 404 a mocking two-finger salute, locks up the shop, and starts the trek back to his apartment. He's crossing between two buildings that really could fall over on each other at any point in time, and a shadow falls from the sky. A person-shaped shadow.

One that stands unnaturally tall, a sword loose in one hand, a cape along their back, and a mask made of bone across high cheekbones. The Blade. The Blood God.

He's meant to be a hero, from what Tommy's seen. From what he's heard? The Blade is more of a mercenary than anything else. He stands behind the Angel as his mentor speaks out against the corrupt, yet there are whispers in the Underground of people dead at a businessman's orders. They'd paid the Blade enough. Blood for the Blood God.

Tommy stares up at him, and eyes redder than fresh blood stare back. It's meant to be intimidating, but the Blade couldn't hurt him if he tried. He raises an eyebrow in challenge, and when the blade speaks, his voice is gruff. It might be a voice changer, or he may just be deepening his voice on his own. Nerd.

"What are you doing out here?" The Blade asks, all wide shoulders and condescending frown.

“I could live out here for all you know,” Tommy shoots back, hands in his pockets against the coming fall chill.

“You don’t look like the kind of kid who would live out here,” the ‘hero’ tells him, and Tommy snorts.

He’d *literally* lived in the building across the street not even a week ago. Tommy just cocks his head to the side, a taunt in his smile. “Look, man, I don’t know what it is you want from me, but I just got off work and I’d like to head back to my apartment. I have class in the morning.”

“Where do you work?” The Blade nearly growls, and this time Tommy *does* laugh. He’s trying so hard to be intimidating and it just is *not* working. He couldn’t hurt Tommy if he tried.

“Neutral Grounds.” Tommy’s grinning, offering the mercenary a shrug as he moves to step around him. When he holds his blade out in front of him, Tommy feels his grin turn a little feral. “Go on, big man. Give it a go, you know you want to. Can’t wait to see your head on a fucking pike when the Warden finds out.”

The Blade is deathly silent, eyes guarded, and then he slowly lowers his weapon. Tommy just shrugs as he continues past him and across the street, and he crouches in the alley beside his old building near the dumpster. He can still feel eyes on his back, but he doesn’t really care.

He ‘pspsps’s at the dumpster, sliding his bookbag off and pulling the cans of wet cat food out of it. Two pairs of yellow eyes slowly come into the light from the streetlamp, and Tommy finds himself smiling.

“Hello, old girl,” he whispers, cracking one of the cans open and sliding it toward the cats across the ground. The kitten pounces on it, and Tommy opens the other one for the mother cat. She lets him pet her while she eats, and Tommy smiles softly down at her. “Sorry I’ve been gone, I had to move for school. Are you two doing alright?”

They're cats, so they don't answer, but Tommy doesn't really care. He stands back up and pops his back, turning on his heel and staring at the Blade who still watches him. Tommy very nicely flips him off and then heads back in the direction of the apartment he lives in now.

When he gets back there, unlocking and opening the door as quietly as he can, Ranboo is standing in the kitchen. In the dark. Like a fucking creep. Ranboo seems as surprised to see him as Tommy is, shades gone and bi-colored eyes wide. Tommy just blinks at him, and Ranboo blinks back.

Then Ranboo holds his hand out to him, and inside of his palm rests a little flower. An allium, if Tommy's old gardener's teachings have stuck with him right. It's only barely bloomed.

"Have a flower," Ranboo states, eyes widening with what Tommy can only assume is panic. He'd probably meant to phrase it as a question, but the words got lost, and it'd come out as a statement. It makes him snort.

He could be mean about it. He could be a dick, an asshole, anything but nice. He could be a lot of things, but Sam had asked him to be nice, so he'll be nice. Just this once.

"Thanks, man." Tommy takes the flower from Ranboo, twirling the stem around in his fingers and observing the way the allium looks in the dark. The only light is the little one above the stove, and it paints the small kitchen in a soft orange. "You like flowers?"

Ranboo stutters a little bit, wringing his hands together in the sleeves of his sweater as he glances anywhere but at Tommy. "Yeah. I- um. Phil, the guy who adopted me, said I couldn't have pets in here. So I've been growing flowers on the fire escape instead. They're nice."

No pets? No pets?? Not on Tommy's watch. He will break all of Philza Minecraft's rules if he can, and this seems like the perfect opportunity.

"What kind of pet would you have? If you could have one, I mean."

“Oh, I had a cat when I was younger. Before- before. I kind of want another one.”

Tommy grins at him, and he gestures at Ranboo with the allium. “We’re getting a cat. No- *two* cats.”

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea,” Ranboo mutters, fingers still twisting in the fabric of his sweater, but there’s a little smile on his face. “He’d know if I bought one.”

“See, Ranboob-”

“It’s- it’s Ranboo.”

“-whatever. We’re not buying a cat, oh no.”

“We’re *stealing* a cat?”

“Is it really stealing if they’re strays?”

Ranboo pauses in his fidgeting, and his smile grows. “I guess not.”

“Let’s go, big man! I just fed them on my way home from work, we can still get them and bring them home before class. Might even have to skip class to make sure they adjust well, yeah? You’d be a terrible father if you brought them back and then left them alone to go to class.” Tommy’s all smiles, slipping the little allium into a glass of water he’d left on the counter this morning. It’s already dying, but maybe he can press it when he comes back.

“I’ve never skipped class before,” Ranboo mutters, but he’s following Tommy out the door anyway.

“Neither have I,” Tommy laughs, and that’s how they end up on their knees in an alleyway in South Side, ‘pspspsing’ at the same dumpster from before. Ranboo looks ready to crawl underneath it, and though Tommy wouldn’t recommend that, he thinks it’d be funny. The cat food cans are empty by now, so he drops them in the dumpster while Ranboo works on coaxing the cats out.

He must succeed in his endeavors because he makes a soft little “oh,” noise, and when Tommy crouches, Mama Cat is brushing up against Ranboo’s knuckles. He turns to Tommy for only a second, a smile lighting up his face. “She’s beautiful.”

“You haven’t seen the other one yet,” Tommy reminds him, and he grins down at the small pair of yellow eyes that’s peering out by his leg. He shuffles the smallest amount, and the kitten slowly emerges to join her mother.

“I haven’t seen the- *Tommy*,” Ranboo breathes, other hand stretching out for the kitten. “She’s so *little*.”

Tommy laughs quietly to himself, exhaustion creeping up his spine as the first hints of sunrise push at the edges of the city. “She was born about a month ago, I think. The other kittens didn’t make it.”

“And you’ve been feeding them?” he asks, scratching under Mama Cat’s chin while he strokes the kitten’s back gently.

“Mhm.”

“You know- I don’t think Phil can get mad at me if they were strays.”

“Atta’ boy, Ranboob,” Tommy laughs, and he leans back on his hands to watch Ranboo slowly pull both cats into his arms. He stands when his roommate does, and they begin their trek back to the apartment. “What are you thinking of naming them?”

Ranboo glances back at him, but he's more preoccupied with keeping the cats in his arms. "You haven't named them yet?"

"I've just been calling them 'Old Girl' and 'Little One,'" he answers, walking at Ranboo's side and scratching Mama Cat's chin.

"I'm- hm. I'm kind of thinking Enderchest. For the mama, see? She's got this really faint pattern on her chest. And maybe Enderpearl for the baby."

Tommy gives Ranboo a skeptical look, and the other boy blushes. "You're just naming them after that vigilante, aren't you?"

"Maybe," Ranboo mutters, and Tommy throws his head back and laughs. "Enderwalk is cool! He can teleport!"

"I don't know, man, that Nuclear guy seems kind of cool."

"I mean- I guess? Enderwalk is better, though."

"Whatever soothes your fanboy ego."

They bring the cats home, and maybe class starts in a few hours, but Tommy finds that he doesn't care all that much. He and Ranboo shut the doors into the bedrooms and Tommy's bathroom, and they work on cat-proofing the house. Ranboo takes the box Tommy's blankets had been in and folds it down to function as a cat bed which Enderchest promptly carries her kitten into, and then they relax.

"I ordered supplies for them," Ranboo tells him after everything is said and done, sinking down onto one corner of the couch while Tommy sequesters himself tightly into the other one. Ranboo sprawls out, one leg on the coffee table and the other folded on the middle

cushion, but Tommy pulls his knees to his chest and presses his back against the armrest. “They should be delivered later.”

Tommy would’ve just walked to the store, but it’s fine. Ranboo can do what he wishes.

“You think you’re gonna get in trouble?” Tommy teases, and Ranboo shrugs as he somehow sinks lower into the couch.

“My family doesn’t come by very often, so I don’t think so. You never know, though.”

As the sun comes up, Ranboo finally sets his phone down and turns on the TV. He switches over to the news, and the man on the screen is regaling the public with news on the vigilante Enderwalk’s heroic actions. He’d apparently been working with the Blade the night before.

“I really don’t like that Blade guy,” Tommy mumbles into his knees. At Ranboo’s questioning noise, he shrugs. “Just heard a lot about him when I was living in my old place. People talk. He’s not the best guy.”

“Maybe they’re just misunderstanding him,” Ranboo offers, but Tommy isn’t sure. He thinks of the handshake he’d witnessed, the money changing hands as a body was dumped into the harbor. He thinks of shiny shoes and expensive suits, and he isn’t sure.

“The good guys are never what they seem, Boob boy,” Tommy answers, and the conversation drops. They continue to watch the news together as the sun rises, and eventually, the newscaster switches from talking about Enderwalk to notifying them about the weather. It’s supposed to be sunny in the morning, but it’ll rain tonight.

Ranboo falls asleep somewhere between news about a hurricane near Mexico and the changes in the stock market, and then the screen grows somber. The newscaster, a woman he’s never seen before, frowns.

*“Today marks the five-month anniversary of the Kraken family’s death,” she states. Tommy watches in quiet silence, knees pulled closer to his chest than they had been before. Beside him, Ranboo snuffles in his sleep. “There are still so many unknowns involving their deaths. Though Thomas, their one and only son, gave descriptions and even sketched his own sighting, their attackers have not been caught.”*

“Their *murderers*,” Tommy corrects quietly, clenching his jaw when tears start to burn his eyes. “They were *murdered*.”

*“As for Thomas, his whereabouts and status of life are still unknown. Police have since dragged the harbor, but none of the bodies found belong to Thomas. He disappeared shortly after the funeral for his parents, and he has not been seen since. If you or anyone you know has seen him, please contact the tip line. And Thomas, if you’re seeing this, please reach out to someone who can keep you safe.”*

The scene switches to a press conference with Philza and Commissioner Puffy, one from the first week he’d been missing, and Tommy snatches the remote from where it rests beside Ranboo’s leg to switch off the TV. He doesn’t want to listen to that. He doesn’t want anything to do with that.

*Thomas, I know you’re scared, Philza will say, all teary-eyed and hopeful. He’ll be flanked by his oldest sons just slightly behind him, Puffy to his right. I know everything is scary right now, but we can keep you safe. Just reach out to us, please.*

Philza had been business partners with his dad *at best*. They were supposed to merge their companies, supposed to work together for a better world. That didn’t happen, and Philza nor his eldest son had been at the meeting that day, and now- *and now-*

It doesn’t matter. It doesn’t fucking matter.

He kind of wonders how no one has recognized him yet. All he did was cut his hair, and he hadn’t even done it well. His curls only save him from so much, you can see how choppy it is when it’s wet. His eyes are duller, sure, and his face is constantly marred by dark circles, but it *really* isn’t that hard to recognize him. Maybe they’re just stupid. He doesn’t dress like he used to, either. Gone are the fancy little suits and the dress shirts, replaced by sweatshirts and hoodies and his mother’s old cardigans.



For people who were supposed to adopt Tommy, they really just do *not* know what he looks like.

Whatever it is that Ranboo ordered shows up, and the guy sleeps through it. Just dead to the world on the couch, hair covering his eyes as he takes up ninety percent of the living room.

Alright- maybe Tommy's exaggerating, but he's still *off* after the fucking new broadcast. They keep showing his face, they keep talking about the fact that his parents are dead, but they never *do* anything. No one does jack shit.

He struggles to drag the box inside and locks the door again, sitting on the floor in the kitchen as he carves the box open with a knife. He didn't know they doordashed cat supplies, but alright. Enderchest hops out of her box and rubs her head against his elbow, and Tommy offers her a little hum.

"I know, Old Girl," he mutters, sorting different supplies away from each other. The giant bag of cat litter would explain why he had such a hard time pulling it inside. There's a litter box, a cat bed, three little bowls with fish painted on them, and a bunch of toys. There's also a couple of sweaters, but Enderchest doesn't seem like the sweater-wearing type.

There are two little collars with bells, too. It's sweet.

Ranboo's phone vibrates angrily on the coffee table, but he doesn't seem to wake up to the sound of it. Tommy scoffs under his breath as he unwraps the plastic from around one of the bowls, giving Enderchest a look.

"I don't know how he can sleep through that," Tommy says to her, lifting his arm so she can slink into his lap. He's giving up on being quiet, Ranboo clearly won't wake up. "I never have my ringer on. No one's allowed to contact me."

She meows at him, bumping her forehead against his chin.

“You can contact me, I guess.”

His phone buzzes -apparently he’s a hypocrite- and he slides it out of the pocket of his jeans to read whatever message Puffy sent him. It’s an unknown number, though, identifying itself as ‘Tubbo.’ He says he’s Ranboo’s brother, and he wants Tommy to make sure Ranboo isn’t dead.

*still alive*

*unfortunately*

*damn*

*oh wel*

Tommy snickers to himself and closes his phone before going back to pulling the plastic off, and he watches Enderchest bat at a packing peanut out of the corner of his eye.

He’s glad he disappeared before Philza could adopt him, but at least he knows he’d have gotten along with at least two of his kids. He doesn’t need a new dad. He already has one.

## Chapter End Notes

still no tags!! i have no concept of time management!! yay!!!

if you see spelling errors no you dont

hi xy

# Hold On- You Guys Are Buddies?

## Chapter Summary

“Excuse me?”

“We’re working together for a better world.”

Tommy just blinks at him, and to his right, Dream wheezes a laugh. “You sound like a fuckin’ supremacist, man,” the villain cackles. “Maybe don’t word it like that?”

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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Things are good for a while. September passes slowly, quietly, and Tommy feels like he might have made a couple of friends. He works at the cafe, he goes to class, he hangs out with Ranboo and the cats. Wilbur comes over sometimes, and he’s a little more tolerable than he had been before. Tommy thinks Wilbur is forcefully trying to push him into younger brother territory.

He doesn't meet Tubbo in person, but they text. Sometimes Tubbo will facetime Ranboo, but Tommy usually ends up with the phone twenty minutes in and the three of them just talk. He hasn't seen Technoblade since the first day he moved in. Philza doesn't come by the apartment.

Things are good as summer gives way to autumn, as September bleeds into October. Ranboo starts hanging up orange leaves and black cats -decorations, not the girls- like a suburban white mom. Tubbo keeps amazon priming them candy corn; Wilbur shows up in a dumb witch hat when Tommy and Ranboo are supposed to be studying.

And then the news channel shares the story of a family that got murdered in South Side. Two parents and their teenage son. Whatever normalcy Tommy had found crumbles through his fingers like sand.

He wakes up- and there's water in his mouth. It's all over his face, his hands, sliding in rivulets down his neck. It's almost like he's drowning, but he can still breathe.

He's- he's on the roof. He just woke up and he's on the roof. He doesn't remember how he- yes he does. He'd come up here because he was tired, and he'd wanted to see what would happen. See if he'd slip.

See if he'd die.

But he's not dead, and he's awake, and there's someone standing over him. He knows her; he's served her at Neutral Grounds. The city decided to call her Watergirl because they're uncreative as all shit, but it fits her powers pretty well. A little presumptuous on the gender-front, but go off.

"Tommy?" She asks him, voice soft and sweet as she holds her hand up to keep the rain from falling on them. He likes the rain. She should let it fall. "Are you alright?"

Is he? He thinks he is, but maybe he isn't. It's been a while since he's eaten, even longer since he's slept. Well- not anymore.

"Can you hear me?"

"Yeah," he croaks, pushing himself up on his elbows and swallowing the rainwater that'd gathered in his mouth. "I'm alright."

"You were sleeping on the roof in the *rain*, though."

And, okay, maybe he was. But people who are perfectly mentally healthy sleep on the roof in the rain, too. Probably. He's all good.

"It wasn't raining when I fell asleep." A lie, but she'll never know.

“It’s been raining since yesterday, Tommy.” Rats. She knows.

He sits up all the way, folding over himself to press his eyes into the heels of his hands. It’s dark outside, and that means he missed the start of his shift. He didn’t even mean to fall asleep up here- he just wanted to lay in the rain until he needed to shower before work. His phone had an alarm on it but... his phone is inside. Because he’s so smart and constantly plans ahead. Yup.

Watergirl -holy fuck does he hate that name- moves to sit down in front of him, and she forms this weird bubble around them out of the rain. It refracts the streetlights in a fun sort of way, almost like he’s sitting at the bottom of a swimming pool. It’s nothing like the dark pool from his dreams, but it’s close enough. The bubble keeps the rain off of them.

“You didn’t show up to the cafe, and Sam was worried,” she explains kindly, and Tommy feels even worse. He hadn’t meant to make Sam worry. “Fireboy was looking for you around the cafe, wanted to make sure you hadn’t been left for dead in an alley. I let him know I found you, and he’s telling Sam.”

“Sam’s still there?” Tommy all but whines, and Watergirl laughs softly.

“No, the Warden made him go home. He’s been looking for you with Phantom.”

Tommy wants to roll over and die right here, right now. The fact that he’d made Sam worry this much makes his chest absolutely burn with guilt. He’d meant to go into work, he really had!

“No, Tommy, don’t cry,” she soothes, and he shoves his face back into his hands.

“I’m not fucking crying,” he hisses even as his words choke him. “It’s just- it’s the fucking *rain*.”

Watergirl places a gentle hand on his knee, and when he peers up at her, her smile is soft. Kind. It makes him crumble even more than he already was.

“Do you want a hug?” She whispers, all soft words and softer smiles, and Tommy barely has a second to think about it before he’s throwing himself into her. She makes a small noise when she catches him, nearly falling backward with the force of it, but she rights them both and wraps him tightly in her arms. “I know. I know, and I’m so sorry. Moving’s a big change, I know you’re stressed.”

She doesn’t even know the half of it.

He curls tighter against her, tucking his face into her shoulder and sealing himself in his arms. She rubs up and down his back gently with one hand, the other firmly between his shoulders, and Tommy breaks even further.

His nanny used to hold him like this. Even when he grew taller than her, she’d still hold him in such a way that made him feel small. Clementine taught him everything he could have ever wished to know from the time he learned to speak until he turned twelve, and then she died. She put plasters on his knees when his parents had to go away for business, she stood him up on a stool and let him help her bake. She always had an answer for every question he had.

He was still young when she died, only halfway to thirteen, and he’d named his first phone after her. It was stupid, but his phone always answered his questions. His phone always knew what recipe he needed or how to bandage a wound. He’s named every phone he’s ever had Clementine, and he’s plastered a moth sticker to the back of it in memory of his nanny's only tattoo. It’d been a death moth.

Clementine was so badass. He misses her so much.

The only piece of his childhood he has left is Henry, his driver, and he can barely stomach looking at him. Sundays are the only days he sees him, and even then, he can’t always do it. He’s a reminder of what Tommy’s lost.

“You’re alright,” she whispers into his shoulder, and Tommy presses impossibly closer to her. He hasn’t had a hug in so long- he hasn’t let himself be hugged. “You’re okay, Tommy. I’m here.”

Tommy wants his *mom*. He wants his *dad*, and he wants his fucking *nanny*, and he wants his old friends, and holy fucking shit he wants Ranboo- or- or Tubbo or even fucking *Wilbur*. He hates himself for wanting them because they’re not *his*, and he doesn’t deserve friends when he’s going to go so soon, but he wants someone familiar. He wants his family back.

In the midst of his crying, the water bubble breaks open and someone else steps inside. Tommy peeks out the shelter of his arms and Niki’s shoulder into a smiley mask, and he cringes. Dream stands there completely drenched, lime green hoodie plastered to his shoulders.

“Hi,” Dream says, crouching down to be eye level with him, and Tommy thinks he’s smiling under his mask. “You’re all wet.”

“So are you,” Tommy whispers back.

The bubble breaks open again and someone comes sputtering inside, hissing and complaining the whole way. Tommy pulls away from Watergirl and scrubs at his eyes, and he looks over his shoulder to watch Arsonist shake himself like a wet dog.

“I hate the rain,” Arsonist mutters, frowning at Dream before glancing at Watergirl and Tommy. “The rain is terrible and I hate it.”

“So you've said,” Watergirl laughs, and Tommy just rubs his tears away with the still damp sleeves of his hoodie.

Tommy thinks they’re supposed to be fighting with each other, considering there are two villains and a vigilante inside of this little bubble, but maybe they can’t because Tommy’s here. Should he leave? He feels like he should leave.

“You didn’t answer when I called about my bagels,” Dream informs him.

“So you showed up at my address?”

“Can’t have my favorite bagel-boy disappearing on me, can I?”

“I *do* like those bagels,” Arsonist mutters, and despite the fact that he’s kind of in the midst of a breakdown, Tommy finds himself laughing.

Watergirl snickers as well, and Tommy finally shuffles away from her to sit back. Dream and Arsonist move to sit beside them and they complete their little group of four, and Tommy kind of feels like he’s in group therapy. Puffy had tried to send him to therapy after his parents died, but that was a useless endeavor considering he disappeared off the face of the planet.

“Aren’t you guys supposed to be fighting each other?” Tommy asks them, and the three of them laugh.

“I’m gonna tell you a secret,” Arsonist says even as Watergirl snaps her hand out to whack his shoulder. “We’re not actually enemies.”

“Excuse me?”

“We’re working together for a better world.”

Tommy just blinks at him, and to his right, Dream wheezes a laugh. “You sound like a fuckin’ supremacist, man,” the villain cackles. “Maybe don’t word it like that?”

“Whoops.”



“Yeah, whoops.”

Watergirl shakes her head fondly, a little smile on her face, and she reaches out to pat Tommy on his knee. “What he *means* is we all work together. The heroes work in the public, vigilantes and the like do more work in the shadows, and then ‘villains’ do the dirty work.”

“Like setting that police station on fire?” Tommy asks, and Arsonist cheers.

“Yeah! Those fuckers deserved it, too. Bunch of fucking pigs.”

“Acab,” Tommy cheers quietly, “Thirteen-twelve. Woo.”

“Sound more enthused, why don’t you,” Dream comments sarcastically, and Tommy tucks his face back into his hands. He’s still so tired.

Watergirl hushes the other two in their little group, and the atmosphere grows a little more somber. Tears still threaten the back of Tommy’s eyes with a burning sensation he absolutely despises. He sucks in a deep breath and pushes himself to his feet, offering Watergirl a hand while the other two right themselves. It really wasn’t a good idea to do that considering he hasn’t eaten in a *while*, but it is what it is. Dream catches him when he stumbles.

“You should head back inside,” Arsonist comments quietly. “Maybe let us in? Hm? So we don’t get wet?”

“Stop it,” Watergirl hisses, and Tommy snorts. She turns to address him, and her smile is still kind. “You’re all good, Tommy. You can go back inside.”

He bids them farewell, and she walks him down his fire escape to keep the rain off of him. When he glances back at the roof, Dream and Arsonist are gone.

“Get some rest,” she whispers once he’s crawled through his window, and then she leaves, too. He’s all alone.

At least, he *was* alone for all of two minutes before his door is thrown open, and Wilbur forces his way inside. Ranboo comes in behind him with a much shorter boy by his side, but Tommy recognizes Tubbo from their facetime calls.

“Good to know you’re not dead in an alley, bossman!” Tubbo exclaims, and Tommy lets himself be pulled into a hug from all sides. He doesn’t hug back -he’s far too emotionally raw for any of that, thanks- but he does try to smile for them when they all pull away.

“Let Ranboo know when you’re gonna disappear next time, gremlin,” Wilbur informs him, “you’re gonna put him in an early grave.”

Tommy thinks Wilbur’s more concerned than he’s letting on, no that he’s very good at hiding it, but that’s his own fault. Tommy never asked them to care about him. They’ve done that of their own volition.

Grave. Ha.

He’s more subdued for the next few days, and it doesn’t help that Sam gives him time off. He spends all of the time he’s not in class simply wandering the city, watching the people who pass by, and observing the way things have changed. Not much really *has* changed, honestly. The people are still struggling, there are still several too many crimes.

He gives money to the homeless people he passes, and then he keeps walking. He doesn’t have the emotional capacity to listen to them thank him- he doesn’t deserve it. It’s people with money who have failed them. People like him. He doesn’t deserve their thanks.

As he’s passing an old building by the docks -when had he gotten out here?- he spots a car far too fancy to be that of a worker parked near the side. The car is black, the windows are tinted, and Tommy can just barely see a man in dark sunglasses and a shitty hat in the front seat. A driver, one for someone with money. He’s got a lot of experience recognizing them.

He could just keep walking, he knows that. But the slope of the driver's jawline is familiar, and Tommy is so sick of his case not having any updates. He would recognize their faces anywhere- he spent too long sketching and re-sketching to forget.

So Tommy finds an old window into the building on a side where no one can see him, activates his White Person In A Horror Movie mode, and goes to Investigate.

If the police can't find these guys, and the heroes haven't come up with anything, Tommy is going to start looking for himself. He's just cool like that.

## Chapter End Notes

me, hunched over my desk with crippling backpain and no idea where this fic is going:  
time to update :D

spelling errors? idk her

also still no tags. hi sail

# Faster Than The Flash, Baby!

## Chapter Summary

He's going to die.

He doesn't want to die like this.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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Tommy is so sneaky. He is a master of stealth- he is a ninja except he has eaten exactly one meal in the last two days and will likely fall over at any given moment.

He's gonna blame Sam for why he's here. Watergirl told Sam that Tommy was 'stressed' and 'depressed' and 'in need of a break,' so Sam's given him an entire fucking week off work. Like an asshole. Motherfucking shit for brains, smelly, green-haired cafe owning as- oh! A mouse!

"Hello there," Tommy whispers as he crouches in front of the mouse, holding out his hand to pet it. The mouse tries to bite him, but it can't. Silly mouse. "Would you like to be my friend?" The mouse hops into his hand, and he happily places it in the weird little pocket on the chest of his hoodie.

New friend acquired, Tommy continues to Investigate. He slinks around boxes and probable bloodstains alike, stepping over dead leaves and a very suspicious stain that he will not be questioning the origins of time to move on!! No thank you!!! It sure wasn't blood, that much he knows.

He can hear voices deeper in the building, bouncing off the high ceilings even as they attempt to whisper. Or- well. They're arguing very quietly. Tommy shimmies around an old post and slips his phone out of his pocket, swiping off the home screen and pressing record. He zooms in on them with the camera quality -he needs a new phone, but at least the cracking doesn't ruin his back camera quality- and he peers at their faces.

It's them. It's- those are the guys that killed his parents. None of them are wearing a mask except for the man in the middle, gesturing with a gun in one hand while the other waves around a cigarette. His mask looks burnt around the edges, some kind of distorted replica of a demonic ram complete with the pentagram on the forehead and everything. He's wearing a suit. All of the other guys are also wearing suits, but they don't have any kind of mask. Just guns. Lots and lots of guns.

"The Reapers have done well," the masked man says, bowing low when his colleagues clap. Tommy zooms in as far as he can and holds his breath. The Reapers. They're calling themselves the *Reapers*. "No one new has gotten close to our Lady, leaving the positions open for us. It's only a matter of time, my brothers. We're working to get our people into their home, and soon, the bigger plan will commence."

What the fuck? Like- like actually, what in the fuck?? Is this?? Satanism?? 'Our Lady'?? Tommy is so fucking confused. He hasn't slept enough to process this shit.

The other men cheer, and Tommy feels like he's about to shit his stomach out. He didn't need it anyway, it's fine.

Mask Man bows deeply again, cigarette and gun flourishing behind him, and then he looks around the group that has gathered for him. He stops, though, and Tommy watches the mask make eye contact with the camera of his phone. He freezes, and Mask Man freezes except for a tilt of his head. When he speaks again after a long pause, he sounds like he's smiling.

"We have a visitor," he lulls, and that's Tommy's cue to book it. He turns on his heel and deposits his mouse friend on a box so he doesn't steal them from their home, and then he sprints as quickly as he can out of the building.

"My gun isn't fucking working!" One of the men shouts, hot on his tail. The others echo similar complaints, and Tommy looks over his shoulder in enough time to watch one of them grab for him. Their entire body freezes before his hand can land on Tommy's shoulder, and he roars in outrage.

“I am running so fast,” Tommy sings to himself, ducking under a beam that’s long since fallen and thanking his lucky stars he was born the way he was. “I am so fast- I’m gone in a flash- so fast so fast so- *shit!*”

Mask Man is in front of him, gun drawn, and Tommy careens to the side to avoid him. He tumbles over an old crate and into a pile of glass -which, *ouch-* and then he pushes himself back to his feet and keeps running. He really isn’t that fast, not after so long of not eating, but the adrenaline is doing wonders for getting him out of here. He just needs to find that broken window he came through and- there! It’s right there!

Maybe literally throwing himself through a broken window is a bad idea, but he doesn’t have time to climb safely through. The jagged glass cuts right through his hoodie and cuts up his arms and face even more than falling in a pile of it already had, but Tommy’s *getting out of this building* and he is *running*. He fucking- he *found them*. These people that the police and the heroes have been hunting for almost six fucking months, and he *found them*.

He scrambles back to his feet and ignores the burning of the cuts that now mar his skin, pushing himself in the direction of safety. He needs to get out of here. He needs to get- he’s in South Side. He’s by the docks, and even if he has to run for a while, he can get to safety. He can get to neutral ground. Sorry in advance to Sam, but Tommy might be bringing some not-so-nice people in there.

They can’t hurt him, he knows that. Not if they tried. But that doesn’t mean he isn’t still terrified after facing the people who *murdered* his *parents*. Those faces are the last ones his parents saw, and Tommy refuses to let himself accidentally befall the same fate. He refuses to let that mask be the last thing he sees before he dies.

His heart is in his throat, there’s blood slowly painting the white of his hoodie sleeves red, but the large baseball tee he wears on top of it has protected his torso and back. There’s blood dripping from a cut on his eyebrow and his cheek, but he’s going to get away. He *has* to get away. He doesn’t even have time to cry- that’s how desperate he is to make it out of this alive.

He can still hear them behind him, can hear the roar of their car’s engine as they keep chasing him. Even as Tommy tugs his hood up and weaves through the crowd of people that meander through lower L’Manburg at noon on a Saturday, he knows they’re still behind him. He can

feel their fingertips brushing his shoulders before they're forcefully stopped by something they can't control.

He sees it. Made of brick with glass windows and little awnings, Neutral Grounds stands like a haven across the street. Tommy doesn't wait for the cars to stop driving by, doesn't wait for the crosswalk to switch to the little walking man, he just throws himself into traffic and *runs*. This could be how he dies, he knows that. One of these cars or trucks could hit him, but he *refuses* to die. He won't. They can't make him.

A car clips his hip amidst a blaring horn and sends him careening onto the curb, but he pushes himself up and practically throws himself through the glass door. Sam drops the mug of coffee he'd been about to serve the woman at the counter and rushes for him, but the woman gets to him first. She wraps her arms around his torso and practically drags him away from the windows.

She's- she's that soccer mom Tommy served ages ago. She comes in before she has to take her son to practice.

Sam ushers her into the backroom and he slams a button on the underside of the counter, and then he takes up his station at the register like nothing happened. Tommy can just barely see him cleaning the coffee with a rag through the crack in the door as Soccer Mom turns the lights off, and then the bell jingles again as several pairs of feet hurry inside.

"Welcome to Neutral Grounds," Sam says, stressing the name more than he normally would. "What can I get you today?"

Soccer Mom shushes Tommy when he almost whimpers, crouching between him and the door. Her red hair is pulled up in a ponytail, and Tommy can see the way the muscles in her shoulders flex as she watches the men through the crack in the door just like Tommy does. She's positioned herself to spring at someone if they come through the door, he realizes. He wishes she wouldn't- her son is barely five. He's still a baby.

"Have you seen a kid come through here?" The man in front says, the man who- that's the one- he's the one who slit his dad's throat- that's the- that's-

Soccer Mom shushes him again, turning away from the door momentarily to crouch by his side. She reaches her right arm around to cradle the opposite side of his head and tuck his face against her collarbone, and her left arm brackets his chest to keep him steady. She doesn't take her eyes off the door.

"We won't let them get you," she murmurs, and Tommy's almost inclined to believe her. *Almost.*

They already got him, though. They already ripped away the only parents Tommy will ever have, they already stole his life from him and tucked him into hiding. They already got him.

"I haven't seen any kids, no," Sam lies, leaning forward on his palms. "Can I get you anything? If not, I suggest you leave."

"He's about this tall, blond, kinda cut up," the guy continues undeterred, "We're just tryin' to help him."

Sam heaves a sigh, and through the ringing in Tommy's ears, he hears something thump down onto the roof above them. He shakes with unbridled terror, but Soccer Mom just shushes him again. His blood is getting all over the hand she's using to cradle his head.

The door jingles once again, and Tommy watches the men turn. Whatever they see makes them freeze in their tracks.

"This is neutral ground, you know," whoever has entered says, and Tommy knows that voice. He's heard it on the news- it's the fucking Angel. "I hope you gentlemen aren't causing any trouble here."

"They're disrupting the peace, I'm afraid," Sam answers for them, sounding so incredibly disappointed.



The Angel sighs this time, and he sounds equally disappointed. "I'm going to have to ask you to leave, then. There's no fighting here."

Tommy feels like he can hear everything going on outside yet nothing at all. He can hear his heartbeat in his ears, can feel that way tears are slowly stinging their way out of wide, unblinking eyes. Soccer Mom just keeps shushing him quietly, gently petting through his hair despite the callouses on her hands. Tommy can taste blood in his mouth from how hard he's been biting his tongue- can feel himself trembling.

He holds his breath as he watches the men look at each other, and then slowly, almost tauntingly, they make their way out of the cafe. The last one pauses, though, and it feels like he stares directly at Tommy through the crack in the door. Tommy pushes himself into Soccer Mom and whimpers for real this time, and she pulls him closer. He's going to die. He doesn't want to die like this.

And then the final man leaves. Just like that- easy as pie. Like he was never there in the first place.

Tommy takes a shuddering breath that's more of a sob, and Sam throws the door to the back room open. He crouches down in front of Tommy and makes a soft little noise like he's been wounded, reaching out with gentle hands to cup Tommy's face. Behind him in the doorway, the Angel stands guard.

"Who were those guys, Tommy?" Sam asks quietly, brushing away some of the blood and tears that have been steadily leaking down Tommy's face with his thumbs. "What happened?"

He can't- he can't *breathe*. He can't breathe and he's back in that office building and his face is bleeding all over again, and there's brain matter on his face and what's left of his mother's head is in his lap and he- and he-

"I want my mom," Tommy begs, clinging desperately to the arm that's across his chest. "I want my mom- where's my mom- I can't- I- I want my *mom!*"

The face in front of him -Sam. Sam is in front of him with his green hair and his kind eyes-frowns, and there are tears gathering in his eyes, too, and his face pinches. "It's okay, Tommy, you're okay."

"Please, I just want my mom-" he cuts himself off with a sob as he chokes on the air he isn't even getting, and now Sam is crying, too.

"I know you do, buddy, I'm so sorry," Sam whispers, and he keeps wiping away Tommy's tears. His fingertips aren't right, though, they're not marred by little pricks from sewing needles, not calloused by years of playing the guitar when not holding a pen. This isn't who he wants.

"I want my dad," Tommy whines back, and whoever is holding him coos. "I want- I can't- I-I-"

Speaking isn't working anymore. There's not enough air in his chest, not enough functionality left in his brain to get across what he's trying to. It's a useless endeavor, anyway. He can want his parents all he wants- they're not coming back. He'll never get to see them as they were again. He wants to go back to the black pool from his dreams, wants to crawl into his mother's deathbed, wants to lie on his father's grave. He wants so much that he can't have, and it's making him crazy.

"Blow on my face," Sam tells him suddenly, and the request is so out of the blue that Tommy's allowed a moment of clarity. Sam smiles at him, still stroking his thumbs along Tommy's cheeks. "Blow on my face, Tommy."

He tries, but the breath doesn't come out right. His chest is still hitching with sobs, still burning as his lungs twist around each other in a fruitless waltz.

"Good job, Tommy. Do it again, yeah? Big, deep breath." Tommy blows on Sam's face again, and Sam just keeps smiling. He's gentle each time he speaks.

"Give me another one, okay? Like this." Sam blows on Tommy's face like he's trying to cool food, and Tommy does it back.

“You’re doing so well. One more time, Tommy. You can do it.”

And it continues like that for ages, just Tommy blowing on Sam’s face in what feels like a pointless game, but he’s breathing again. His chest still hitches on the occasional sob, and he hasn’t let go of the arm across his chest, but he’s better than he was. He can breathe again.

Sam pulls away slowly, backing up to sit on his heels, and Tommy sucks in the first breath that doesn’t shudder in what feels like hours. He knows where he is again. The broken open skull that’d been in his lap is gone, the brain matter that had covered his clothes is missing. He’s back in the back room, cradled by a woman whose name he doesn’t know, blocked in by a hero and a cafe owner.

“You’re alright,” Soccer Mom tells him, and she, too, slowly pulls away. Tommy sits up properly on his own and tries to keep breathing.

“Thank you for acting so quickly, Sally,” Sam whispers to her -Sally, Tommy’s going to remember it this time- and she smiles at him.

“Of course. I have to go now, though. I want to beat Wil to Fundy’s game.” She turns to Tommy then, and she smiles at him, too. “Will you be okay?”

He has Sam. Sam’s here.

“Yeah.” *Wow*, his voice is wrecked. That’s what he gets for sobbing so hard he couldn’t breathe, he supposes. He clears his throat and tries again, but it doesn’t get any better. “I’ll be okay.”

Sally rubs his shoulder for just a moment, and then she gets up, and she goes to leave. The Angel stops her in the doorway. “Let me walk you to your vehicle,” he tells her. “I want to make sure they’re not still out there.”

“Thank you, Mr. Angel Sir, oh great and mighty-”

“Alright! Alright, none of that.”

Sally laughs, and she and the Angel disappear out of the shop with a jingle of the front door's bell. It's only Sam and Tommy in the back room. He feels like they did that on purpose.

“Do you know who those guys were, Tommy?” Sam asks him kindly, and Tommy tries to remember to keep breathing. He knows who those guys were; he got a video of them-

*He got a video of them. He found them.* He can have emotions later, this is far more important.

“I need to talk to the commissioner,” he tells Sam urgently, shoving his hand into his pocket to grip his phone. “I need- I need to talk to Commissioner Puffy *right now*.”

“She's already on her way,” the Angel says as he reappears in the doorway. His hair and most of his face are hidden by the black hood that covers most of his head. How it stays on while he's flying, Tommy will never know. “Would you feel more comfortable talking to her than to me?”

He's nodding before he can even help himself. The Angel had been there. He'd been meant to catch the men -the Reapers, they call themselves- when they'd killed his parents. He didn't catch them again. He's supposed to be finding the people who killed Tommy's parents.

The Angel nods, and he disappears from the doorway again. For the second time, it's just Sam and Tommy in the back room.

“Can I treat those?” Sam questions delicately, gesturing vaguely at the bloodstains on Tommy's hoodie, at the tracks of blood down his face. The cut on his cheek burns from where a few of his tears had slid into it.

Tommy nods wordlessly, and Sam pulls a first aid kit out of the bottom drawer of the desk against the wall. Tommy does his homework there sometimes. Maybe- maybe Sam will let him come back to work now that he's seen the trouble Tommy can get into when there's nothing to occupy his time.

He wants Puffy to get here. He needs to show her the video.

## Chapter End Notes

sam making tommy blow on his face bc it forces him to focus and take deep breaths?  
10/10 dad technique so proud of him

also i am aware (though yall were not) that tommy in this story is literally british but my distaste for the word mum and his need to remain undercover wins out. would he have slipped up and said it while he was having a meltdown? yes. do i care? no

hi tem

# She's A Warm Corpse

## Chapter Summary

“I can’t die until it gets solved, so it doesn’t fucking matter anyway, does it?”

Puffy blinks at him once, twice, three times, and then she frowns. “Tommy-”

Whoopsie. “I got hurt! So what, though. We’re making progress. I’ve done more than your fucking heroes have in ages, Captain. I did good.”

## Chapter Notes

tw for mentions of wanting to die!! he is not having a good time

also heads up i have included a second clara but this clara is british and therefore elite (in tommy's mind). does it make sense? no. did i do it anyway? yes

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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The Angel left as soon as the police arrived, and Puffy practically threw -this is an exaggeration, Puffy actually fussed over him quite a bit until he shoved himself into her car- him into the passenger seat of her fancy little cruiser. Sam just watched worriedly from in front of the store, asking several times over if Tommy wanted him to come.

Considering Sam doesn’t know that Tommy is currently in hiding, he politely declined and told Sam he’d be fine.

“I know Puffy,” he’d soothed, smile on his face even as it pulled at the butterfly bandages holding his cheek and eyebrow closed. “We go way back.”

Sam had seemed even more concerned by that fact, but that’s none of Tommy’s business.

So now he's sitting in the weird glass box that is Puffy's office, practically bouncing in his seat as she shuts the blinds. She sinks down into her chair and pins him with a look, and Tommy gives her his best smile.

"Now before you get mad at me for being reckless," he prefaces, "I did something that no one else has done yet."

Puffy just blinks at him, face pulled into a frown. She's going to go gray at this rate. "Plenty of people have gotten chased, Tommy."

"No. No no, look. Look at this." He unlocks his phone and opens his gallery, thanking his lucky stars and his general apathetic nature for the sheer amount of space on his phone. He taps the video so it fullscreens, and then he slides the phone across the desk to Puffy. "Play that."

"I swear to god, Tommy-" But then she presses play, and she goes silent.

*"The Reapers have done well,"* his phone parrots, the voice of the masked man playing back at them both. Puffy watches it all the way through even as the part where Tommy had been running for his life begins, and then she pauses and rewinds. She plays it back from the beginning two more times. Finally, she slides the video to a specific point and pauses, staring down at the face on the screen.

She pulls open one of her drawers and pulls out a thick file, and from that file she pulls out a sketch Tommy had done. The sketch artist the police had provided couldn't get the face right no matter how hard they tried, so Tommy had done it for them. That face was burned into his memory and would stay there until the day he died.

"Holy shit," Puffy breathes, glancing between the paused video and the sketch. "You- holy *shit*, Tommy."

He can't help feeling smug; it's only fair. "You guys have been hunting these guys for six fucking months, and I found them on *accident*. That's the guy that- that's the one who- Mhm. Yup."

"Mom or dad?" Puffy asks quietly, and Tommy kind of shrinks. Only a little.

"Dad."

She inhales sharply, and she flips the phone back around to face him. "Can you send that to me? I'd upload it to my computer, but the way they were talking- I'm not sure. We might be compromised."

"Like, the police station?"

"The entire department. I'm not sure. We've never had a group like this before; there are the gangs in South Side, sure, and the mafia families in West End, but nothing like this. At least the gangs and the families are obvious."

Tommy breathes out sharply, swiping up on the video and sharing it to Puffy's contact. Her cell phone dings, and she watches the video for a fifth time. Maybe to make sure it's all there, maybe because she still can't believe it. Tommy can barely believe it himself.

She turns her phone off and slips it into her pocket, and then she pins him with a Look. Uh oh. "While I'm proud of you for finding this-" here it comes "-that doesn't excuse the fact that you could've gotten yourself *killed*. What you did was *dangerous*, Tommy, and I don't know if you understand that."

"But look! I'm fine, see! Yeah, it was dangerous, but now we know they're still in the city!"

"That wouldn't have mattered if you were dead."



“I can’t die until it gets solved, so it doesn’t fucking matter anyway, does it?”

Puffy blinks at him once, twice, three times, and then she frowns. “Tommy-”

Whoopsie. “I got hurt! So what, though. We’re making progress. I’ve done more than your fucking heroes have in ages, Captain. I did good.”

“You could’ve gotten worse than hurt, though,” she argues, and she sounds *angry*. “I don’t think you’re comprehending the fact that you could’ve *died!*”

“They couldn’t even hurt me if they tried!” Well, they’re shouting now.

“Being smug isn’t going to keep you safe! These men killed your parents, and they may try to kill you, too!”

He stands roughly and fists his hands in his hair, tugging on the uneven strands as he tries to keep himself from shaking all over again. “I’m not being fucking smug! They *literally* can’t hurt me if they try! What aren’t you getting about that?!”

“So- so what? You can only get hurt if it’s an accident?!”

“Yes!” He throws his arms out to his sides when she stands up too, gesturing vaguely around him to try and get the point across. “That’s what I keep telling everyone, but no one will fucking *listen* to me!”

“That isn’t how it works!” Puffy shouts back. “If they shoot at you, you *die!* If they catch you, you *die!* This isn’t some strange ability you have, Tommy!”

“Fuck you fuck you fuck you!” He’s screaming at her, and he’s stumbling away from her desk and toward the door. “You would’ve been a shit therapist, Captain!”

He slams her door behind him, and he ignores the looks from the police officers and receptionists and detectives. They don't know shit. Nobody knows *shit* about him, and when he tries to tell them, they don't listen. Nobody fucking *listens*.

The second he's out the front doors, his phone is to his ear as he listens to it ring. It goes for a few seconds before Henry picks up, and Tommy feels himself sag.

"I'd like to go home, please," he whispers into the phone, and Henry hums.

*"Of course, Master Thomas. Where can I find you?"*

"Police station in Central."

Henry hums again, and Tommy can faintly hear the sounds of rings clinking. *"I trust you're not in trouble?"*

"Not with the law," he mumbles back, and Henry laughs. They exchange a few more words before they hang up, and then Tommy parks himself on a bench outside the station and waits. His wait is never very long whenever Henry's the one driving -speed demon that he is- but he still has to wait. He turns off his message notifications when Puffy keeps texting him, and then he turns off the ones for calls just to be safe. He doesn't want to be contacted.

The same black car with likely illegally tinted windows pulls up in front of the police station, and Tommy slides into the back. He doesn't bother with his seatbelt this time, just lies down in the backseat and curls up into the smallest ball he can manage. It's difficult when he's as tall and gangly as he is, but he makes it work. He always makes it work.

"Rough day?" Henry asks him kindly, peering at him through the rearview mirror, and Tommy just huffs. "Did you make any new friends?"

“Nope,” Tommy pops the ‘p’, and he buries his nose in the collar of his hoodie. “Found some of the guys who- um. Who were responsible for the attack, though. They chased me for a while.”

“Are you alright?”

He huffs a laugh this time, squeezing his eyes shut and feeling his face burn when a few tears leak out anyway. “I haven’t been alright in months, Henry.”

Henry doesn’t try to talk to him again, and he’s grateful for that. This is one of the perks of actually interacting with someone who’s known him since he was a child: they know when he just needs silence. Henry knows that Tommy is fraying at the seams, and considering he’s requested to go somewhere that’s going to emotionally demolish him even further, he just wants a moment of quiet.

It takes far longer for the car to get to his home than it did for Henry to pick him up, but that’s none of Tommy’s business. Henry is a mysterious man with mysterious hobbies- he can do whatever he pleases. He feels a little bad that he’d made his driver stop whatever he was doing to come get him but, well. That’s what he gets paid for.

The scenery changes slowly from high-rise buildings to shorter apartments, and that quickly progresses into sparse trees and rolling fields, and that slowly becomes mansions dotted around. They’re entering Old L’Manburg now. Tommy can’t really see anything with where his head is resting on the seat, but he knows the turns by heart.

Old L’Manburg is where most of the extremely wealthy live. Somewhere out in these fields is the Minecraft family’s mansion, but they’re even further out than Tommy’s home is. Being so far out means they tend to be safe from the crime that’s crippling L’Manburg because no one wants to drive for over an hour just to rob someone, and the security systems out here are too complex. Some of the business men who live out here have round-the-clock guards.

Henry rolls his window down as they roll to a stop in the driveway, and he leans out to slide his keycard through the slot. The large metal gate slowly creaks open and Tommy drags himself into a sitting position, and he watches the mansion draw closer.

This is his final stop on Sundays, but apparently he's doing it early. He hadn't even really processed it before they were pulling in. Now, though, his heart is simultaneously racing and sinking.

The mansion is tall and wide, three stories with too many wings and even more rooms. His parents liked to splurge when they were alive- Tommy never understood why they couldn't just live in a home big enough for the three of them. He would've preferred it that way, honestly. Just him and his mom and his dad, no business to take care of and no strange groups to piss off.

Tommy hates this place now. It's too empty, too quiet, even with the bustling maids and nurses that cover the floors day in and day out. The gardens are empty except for the florists, the kitchens empty except for the chefs. The walls are lined with pictures, the closets are full of clothes. The house is full of everyone who has ever been there and more, yet there are two sets of footsteps that don't wander the halls the way they're supposed to.

He slides out of the car, and Henry walks him to the door where a maid greets them. Tommy knows he knows her name, but his head is too foggy to remember. Everything in this fucking house reminds him of what he's lost. It twists his mind around and leaves him as more of a walking corpse than a human being.

"Welcome home, Master Thomas," the maid -Clara, he thinks her name is- greets, a little frown on her face as she looks him over. "Are you in need of medical attention?"

He thinks of the pain in his hip, the massive bruise that he can already feel forming after basically being hit by a car, and he shakes his head. He's fine.

"Alright, then. Be well, Master Thomas."

He hasn't been Thomas in months; this all feels like a dream.

He leaves Clara and Henry in the entranceway, and he climbs the stairs as quickly as he can without irritating his hip further. It hurts to walk when his hip feels as stiff as it does, but he doesn't care. He just wants to shower and lay down.

Tommy's old bedroom is the way it's always been. Pristine, untouched by dust, the bed made and his clothes hung up in the open closet. His posters still hang on the walls beside the polaroids of his old friends, and his stuffed cow -which he'd named after Henry as a child- sits perfectly in the center of his bed. His old easel sits by the window, long-dried paint tubes and clean brushes sitting on the little table beside it. The painting he'd been working on with his mother is still waiting to be finished.

It never will be.

It's all too much- being in here, seeing everything exactly as he'd left it when he'd left with his mother and father to the building that morning all those months ago. He locks himself in the ensuite and showers, though he spends most of that time simply sitting on the floor. Dried blood that Sam had missed runs brown and burnt into the drain.

He doesn't bother with bandages again when he's done. All he needs are his sweatpants, his t-shirt, and an old cardigan he'd stolen from his mother when he was small. It's pale pink and covered in daisies, and it somehow hangs down over his hands. She's always liked oversized things. He brings Cow Henry, too, just to be safe.

When he exits his wing of the house and wanders into what's now become the hospital wing, the nurses shuffle out of his way. They know why he's here, and they give him soft, sad smiles as he passes them by. In the beginning, they used to try and speak to him. He's never responsive in this wing of the house. They stopped trying.

The room at the end of the hall, large and bordered on three sides by windows, is his destination. He *hates* his destination.

*He misses his mom.*

She lies in the middle of the too big hospital bed, and her eyes remain closed. She's attached to machines that keep her heart beating, lungs moving, but that's all she is anymore. Near-total brain death, that's what the bullet had done. Blew through her skull and left only her brain stem intact, and even that is a stretch. It can't do much for her anymore.

“Hey,” he croaks, shuffling to the side of the bed with the least machinery and slowly climbing in, tucking Cow Henry to his chest as he rests his head on his mother’s shoulder. They’ve wrapped her head so he can’t see the chunk of it that’s missing, but he still doesn’t like to look. “You been okay?”

She doesn’t answer- she *never* answers. She’s a warm corpse.

“I haven’t been doing too good, honestly, but what else is new?” He’s talking to fill the space, maybe just to see if she’d wake up, but he knows she won’t. It pushes tears back into his eyes all over again and he curls tighter against her, bringing Cow Henry up to his chin. “I really wanna die, mum.”

The forced accent that comes with hiding is gone, he doesn’t need it in here. There’s no one to hide from in this room except himself.

“I- it’s getting really bad.” He inhales shakily, squeezing his eyes shut as tight as they’ll go and pressing into his mother’s shoulder. She can’t hold him anymore, but he still wishes she would. He misses her so much. “I keep- I keep *trying* and it won’t work because I can’t fucking kill myself on purpose. Did you know that? This shitty ability applies to me, too. It’s not just- just everyone else who can’t hurt me on purpose- it’s me, too.”

She’d cry if she could hear him, if she was anything more than a dead body kept alive by machines. She’d cry and she’d hold him and she’d apologize even though it isn’t her fault, but she can’t do those things. It drives him crazy and yet he’s still here, still acting like a child searching for his mother. She’s right here, but she’s not. He’s still just a kid.

“I don’t wanna be alive anymore.” God, isn’t he pathetic. Crying to a dead woman about wanting to be dead. Not everything is about him.

She doesn’t answer. She never answers. She can’t.

He sleeps there beside her on her deathbed, and he wakes up, and he cries some more. Clara brings him food he doesn't eat. His mother doesn't wake up. It's a cycle he repeats every Sunday, but he's doing it a little earlier in the week this time.

Tommy just... he misses her. His mother.

A warm corpse.

## Chapter End Notes

the song i use for ng!tommy is 'i love you so' by the walters if yall were curious

also bad news: my shoulder is fucked and even though i know i said there was no update schedule for this now yall may have to wait a While bc sitting at my desk causes me a lot of pain and i unfortunately have to use the little time i can sit here for schoolwork. i know, it's terrible

spelling errors don't exist

hi ash

# A Body That Needs To Be Found

## Chapter Summary

"How'd you find me?"

"Tracked your phone."

"You- you *tracked my phone?*"

## Chapter Notes

oo baybee tw for more suicidal thoughts lets gooooo

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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Tommy is used to waking up in his mother's deathbed on Mondays, not Sundays. He's used to opening his eyes to crusted tears to the sound of his alarm for school, not the quiet sound of the double doors opening when a nurse comes in to check his mother's vitals.

The beeping of her heart monitor, though, he is more than used to. It's been his background noise every Sunday for six months.

In the beginning, he couldn't sleep with the incessant beeping hovering just behind his head like the toll of a mourning bell. It was a constant crippling reminder that his mother was gone even though she was right there. It'd been so difficult to understand that even though her heart was beating and she was breathing, she wasn't alive. His mind had struggled to grasp the fact that she was dead even though the machines were keeping her heart beating.

He's grasped it now, obviously.



That doesn't mean he's stopped wishing she'd live.

Clara -the cool British one, not the one from the cafe- follows the nurse inside, and her eyes are kind.

"Good morning, Master Thomas," she greets gently, "will you be eating with us today?"

"No, thank you." He pushes himself out of the deathbed slowly, hip aching with both bruise and misuse. He puts all his weight on his right leg when he finally makes it off the bed, and it takes all of his strength to keep from collapsing.

"Are you alright?" It's the nurse asking him- she's American. It's the only way he can tell her apart from Clara when he's not looking at them. "Your leg seems to be in pain. Do you want me to look at it for you?"

Tommy waves her away, shuffling stiffly around Clara and toward the door. "I'm alright, yeah. Thanks, though."

He is most certainly *not* alright, but what is he going to do? Ask for help? Psh, yeah. *Right.*

The bruise itself is ugly- if he's being honest. Nasty purples that crawl around his hip and thigh like he's rolled in some particularly nasty dirt, deep reds outlining shapes he can't pinpoint in his skin. When he touches it, he has to gasp around the pain that flares around his brain in bright whites.

Maybe he *won't* wear jeans today. They usually don't sit tightly on his body anyway -not when he barely eats, at least- but trying to pull the waistband up might hurt. Cargo pants may be the same way.

He could... he could always put on a pair of his dad's old sweatpants. His dad was taller than him, so the pants would be long enough that he could set the waistband above the bruise and not look like he has a wedgie. Plus- it's Sunday. No one is really going to be looking for him.

But- well. Wearing his dad's clothes means going into his parents' bedroom, and he hasn't been in there in a long time. He basically lived in there the first week after- when- anyway. He hasn't been in there in genuine months, and the thought of going in again isn't pleasant. He'll be fine with what he has.

A pair of his own sweatpants and a hoodie is what he decides on, and then he's making his way down the stairs and toward the front door. Henry is already waiting there with his keys.

"You're up rather late," Henry comments as they make their way to the car, and yeah, maybe he is. Normally, Henry comes to get him from the apartment sometime around five in the morning, but today, they're pushing six-thirty. Today, Tommy's body crashed so rapidly after the adrenaline rush that he'd slept straight through the night. He'd floated in that dark pool and simply existed away from prying eyes and nightmares.

"Rough day yesterday."

Henry turns the car around in the too-fancy driveway, and he drives back down to the gate. Tommy slumps further into the backseat as they pass through the creaking iron, and then it's an hour-long drive to reach the cemetery. The graveyard.

This is his first stop on Sundays. This is where he spends the first half of his day, and then he eats lunch with Puffy. After that, he goes home and lies beside his mother on her deathbed until Monday morning, and then he goes to school. It's a routine he can't bring himself to break.

Except this time, he probably won't be meeting with Puffy. He doesn't even really *want* to see her right now, not with how yesterday went. She was- he *finally* told someone about it. The last people to know had been his friends back in Britain, and that's only because they helped him figure it out. Puffy was supposed to *believe him*. He- he could be a good asset for figuring out who this group is that killed his parents! He could do so much.

Tommy tugs his phone out of his pocket -poor Clementine is going to die soon, he'd forgotten to charge her last night- and turns his notifications back on, cringing when the

homescreen suddenly lights up with little red circles. Yikes. That's... that's a lot of missed calls and unread messages. Maybe he should just- there. Read receipts off.

There are messages from literally *everyone* he knows. Ranboo, Tubbo, Wilbur, Sam, Puffy, Niki and Jack from the cafe whom he befriended not too long ago, even *Technoblade*. He has several messages from Dream as well, as the villain had given him his number for 'safety purposes,' but most of the messages from the night before are signed '*-Super Cool Arson Man.*'

Wait- they got *Violet* involved? There are messages from her, too. Now he feels bad.

*Dream:*

*Hey man, Dream's kinda losin his mind trying to find you. Maybe don't be dead? -Super Cool Arson Man*

*Ranboob:*

*you alright? sam called us to ask if you came home*

*sorry we weren't there if you came by, my nephew had a soccer game*

*did you come home??*

*tommy??*

*answer your phone*

*Tubs:*

*hey bos man*

*bee safe <4*

*<3\**

*get it? bees?*

*Wilburt:*

*Tommy what the fuck happened*

*Why did Sam call me freaking the fuck out?*

*Are you hurt? Did they hurt you?*

*Sam says they hurt you. Who was it? Who fucking hurt you Tommy?*

*Toms*

*Tomathy*

*The commissioner says you two argued and you stormed off and you won't answer her. Where are you??*

*You better not be dead*

*Answer my fucking calls Tommy this isn't funny*

*My son had a soccer game!! Don't be petty and ignore me bc I wasn't giving you attention!!*

*Tommy please*

*This isn't funny anymore*

*Pink boy:*

*Please answer Wilbur or Ranboo before they start crying again, thanks.*

*Puffy:*

*Tommy, I'm sorry that ended like that. Please text me or someone else and let us know you're safe. Those guys could still be out there; we don't want them to get you again.*

*If what you said about you not being able to be hurt is true, we need to talk about this again. It's important.*

*Tommy?*

*Please pick up the phone.*

*Violet:*

*hey dude*

*ur rich ppl friends r asking me if i know where u r*

*i do not*

*dont b dead <3 this is a threat*

*Niki:*

*hi Tommy!! Jack is also here!!*

*hello.*

*that was from Jack!*

*anyway, my friend Wilbur says you're missing?*

*i hope you're okay*

*you can always talk to me*

*Sam:*

*You ran out of here pretty quick, are you okay?*

*I know you're with the commissioner right now, but I wanted to check in again. That was probably really scary.*

*I'm sure the Angel will be letting people know to be on the lookout for those guys who were chasing you. Nobody's supposed to cause conflict on neutral ground unless they have a death wish.*

*Puffy says you two argued and you stormed out? Are you okay? Do you need me to come get you?*

*Tommy?*

*I'll come get you, just tell me where you are. It isn't safe for you to be out on your own right now*

*Fran misses you*

*You're scaring me kid*

*You need to pick up the phone Tommy*

*Bud I can help you if you just answer me*

*It's getting dark and Wilbur says Ranboo told him you didn't go home*

*Please answer*

*I'll kill you if someone finds your body*

*Please don't be a body that needs to be found*

*Tommy*

Tommy turns his notifications and his phone back off when more messages start rolling in, tucking away the guilt that comes with knowing he'd made them worry in favor of being mad at them for thinking he owes them anything. They're not- he's not their friend. Violet will get an apology but everyone else? They just- they just *assume* that he's their friend.

He's not dumb enough to be friends with people when he knows he won't live long enough to ever really know them. If they're panicking this badly over him simply being 'missing' for over twelve hours, he doesn't want to know what they'll do when he's finally dead.

It's better to keep them away. If they still get attached to him, that's their fault.

Tommy spends the rest of the car ride to the cemetery curled into a ball against the door, trying and failing not to think about the text messages he'd gotten. People care about him now, and that wasn't the plan. This wasn't supposed to happen. His wellbeing wasn't supposed to affect anyone; there was no one left for it to affect.

Until now, that is. He started working at this stupid cafe where he's being protected by everyone under the sun, the cafe owner is going all 'dad mode' on him and everything. He moved into this stupid apartment with stupid Ranboo, and Ranboo has all these stupid brothers who have attached themselves to Tommy in some way, and it isn't *fair*. The plan was to find the people who killed his parents, pull the plug on his mother's life support, and then slip off something tall and die. People weren't supposed to get attached to him, and *he* wasn't supposed to get attached to *them*.

This is stupid. Everything is fucking stupid and Tommy hates it all. He is going to throw a fit when he has enough energy to do more than stare blankly at the wall.

When they pull into the parking lot of the small church across the street from the graveyard, Tommy sinks even lower into the backseat. He kind of just wants to turn into a liquid, maybe melt all over the floor and leak out onto the road to be slurped up by bugs and birds. That'd be nice. Return his body to the earth and all that.

"You could wait forever, Master Thomas," Henry says softly from the front seat, a book already in his hands. "Your father will not move."

"I hate you," Tommy tries to bite back, but his voice doesn't come out the way it's supposed to. His fire has been put out, his flame long since stolen. He doesn't have much left to give.

"I know."

Tommy opens the car door, and he gets out. His converses meet cracked asphalt with twin thuds, and then he's on his way. There aren't any birds outside to mask the sound of his own thoughts anymore; it's too cold for them. It's just him and this church, this empty street, this winding path that twists through headstones. No one goes to church here anymore. No one really gets buried out here anymore.

His father was supposed to be buried in London where their family was always buried. His mother was supposed to be laid to rest beside him.

Tommy is the last person in his family, and their bloodline will die with him. It's not as upsetting as it should be.

He'd picked this graveyard for his father. He was the next of kin, so everything fell on him. Funeral arrangements, handling the finances, selling the Kraken business. All of it. The board of directors had been shot and killed, too, and those were his parents' friends. They would have been the ones handling everything if they hadn't been there.

His attorney had asked if he wanted to leave the arrangements up to Philza Minecraft, but Tommy had still been furious with the man and his sons for not being there, too. It's not- it's not *right* of him to wish they'd been in that room, to wish they'd died, too, but he's hurting.

He's angry and he feels so betrayed. He hadn't even known the man and he still hates him. *None of it* is fair.

*'Beloved Father, Loving Husband'* That's what the headstone says. It's plain, it's simple, it's everything his father never was. It's only half full. His mother's name will go beside it when he finally works up the courage to take her off life support.

He's already reserved the spot beside them for himself. *'Thomas I Kraken'* it will say. *'Darling Boy'*

Tommy doesn't speak to his dad like he normally would, not today. He feels empty- cleaned out and disposed of. His insides aren't where they're supposed to be. His hip still hurts.

He lets himself lie there, curled atop the grave of his one and only father as the sun slowly makes its way into the sky. He watches the shadows of the gravestones grow and shrink, watches the frost melt off the grass. Listens to the dying leaves rustle in the trees and shuffle across the ground as the morning breeze blows them around him.

Maybe if he stays here long enough, they'll bury him. He'll rot just as they do until his outsides match his insides, and come spring, someone will blow the corpses of the leaves away and find his instead. Come spring, flowers will sprout from his decaying body and bumblebees will take their pollen to make honey. They'll feed baby bees and those bees will take more pollen, and their cycle will continue only because his has ended.

That'd be nice, he thinks.

But he can't die, not right now, so he pulls his phone from his pocket and taps around until he reaches his voicemails. Might as well do a little more emotional damage to himself while he continues to lie on his father's grave, haha. Can he get a self-destructive behavior in chat? No? Tough crowd.

He's talking to himself now, that's not good. There are only so many people you can talk to when you purposely isolate yourself.



“Toms-” Wilbur's most recent voicemail starts, one from around four in the morning, and he sounds like he's going to cry. Tommy closes out of that one real fast.

“Tommy, listen,” Ranboo's most recent one begins, and he is *definitely* crying. “Please call one of us, or- or come home, or something-”

“Not home,” Tommy murmurs to the phone, and he closes Ranboo's voicemail, too. That apartment can't be home, not when part of his real home is six feet under and the other one is a corpse with a heartbeat. There is no home without them.

He clicks Sam's newest voicemail next, one from around the time Tommy woke up that morning, and he tells himself he'll listen to the whole thing. He will.

“Tommy, I need to know if you're safe. Please just- please just text me and tell me you're safe. I'll leave you alone if I know you're safe.” Tommy curls tighter into himself, throat closing as he listens to these words from someone else. His dad had left him a voicemail like that once- back when Tommy was fourteen and still trying to rebel. He'd never heard his dad cry before. “I can't sleep until I know you're safe.”

He's never heard Sam cry before, either. That's not his problem, though. He's not in control of how much Sam cares about him.

There's a voicemail from Dream, too. Hopefully that one will be a little less... *sad*. It'd be weird to hear the guy be sad.

“I swear to fucking god, Tommy-” oh, this is a much better start. There's the anger Tommy deserves. “If you went and got yourself killed, I will personally bring you back from the dead just to kill you again. You're driving me crazy, kid. Who's going to make my bagels if you're dead? You better not be fucking dead. If I find your body, you don't want to know what I'll do.”

Nothing will get done because no one can find him out here, but to each their own. Pop off king, and all that.

He listens to a few more voicemails, and then he simply lies there. The sun rises higher in the sky while his stomach complains about how he hasn't fed it in well over a day and a half, but that's not his problem. His stomach can eat itself; he doesn't give a shit. He probably won't taste very good, though.

And then the leaves further down the path start to crunch like Henry is walking on them, and Tommy picks his head up to squint over his shoulder. Moving his arms is a challenge, but he gets his hood out of the way in enough time to see who's approaching him. It's not Henry like he originally thought- it's Tubbo.

The brunet sits down beside him, and he sets down a bag of fast food in his lap.

"Hey, boss man," Tubbo says, and his tone is far more gentle than Tommy's ever heard it.

"Hey," he croaks back, and Tubbo's face scrunches in pity. No- no. He can't- maybe it's sympathy.

He doesn't want to be angry right now.

Tubbo opens the bag -Tubburger, it looks like- and he slides a wrapped burger across the ground to rest in front of Tommy's face. He pulls his own burger out of the bag and unwraps it, and he takes a bite that really seems too big for someone of his size. Not that Tommy should judge.

"You should eat that," Tubbo says around a mouthful of food, not even bothering to cover his mouth as he chews. Gross. "I'm guessing you haven't eaten in a while."

As if to confirm his statement, Tommy's stomach growls. Betrayed by his own organs on a *Sunday*- what would Jesus say, hm?? He'd be so disappointed.

“You don’t have to eat all of it. At least half, though. Maybe a couple of fries. It’s lunchtime.”

Tommy hasn’t eaten in two days, then. That’s... that’s really not good. He’s only doing it semi-on purpose, honest. Sometimes he just forgets to eat. Other times he just can’t bring himself to.

“How’d you find me?” Tommy asks him, pushing himself up on one arm and groaning when his body protests the new movement. That’s what he gets for lying in the same position for so long.

“Tracked your phone,” Tubbo answers with a little shrug, and Tommy nearly drops his burger.

“You- you *tracked my phone?*”

Tubbo nods and takes another bite of his burger, and Tommy slowly unwraps his. He’s- Tubbo tracked his phone. That is both incredibly surprising and not surprising at all.

“I did, yeah. It’s not hard.”

“Who *are* you?” Tommy asks him, and Tubbo throws his head back and laughs. He hates that it puts a little smile on his face.

“Puffy’s hacker,” Tubbo answers with a smug little smile, and Tommy chokes on the bite of food that had been in his mouth. “And also Nuclear, but don’t tell anyone I told you that. It’s supposed to be a ‘secret identity’ or some shit.”

Tommy’s absolutely *reeling* right now, thank you. What the fuck? Tubbo’s- what the *fuck?*

“Speaking of, do you like your last name? I picked it because- ‘cause like, you know. You’re in danger.”

“You... you made my last name *Danger* because I’m ‘in danger’?”

“Yeah, pretty much.”

Tommy blinks, and then he blinks again, and then he laughs so hard he almost chokes a second time. Tubbo laughs alongside him, and for just a moment, it feels like things might be a little better. Maybe, just maybe, they’ll be the tiniest bit okay.

But they’re still- they’re still eating lunch on Tommy’s father’s *grave*. His parents are still *dead*.

“Does anyone else know?” Tommy asks him once they’ve both calmed down, and he sips on the coke Tubbo hands him. “Your family, I mean. Didn’t your dad want to adopt me?”

“They’re all too stupid to figure it out, honestly. You literally see Wilbur and Ranboo almost every day and neither of them have figured it out yet. Phil just thinks you’re dead, though. He thinks he failed to keep you safe.”

Tubbo’s answer is reassuring even if it probably shouldn’t be. Is he that unrecognizable now? Is he-

“Wait- hold on.” Tommy stops eating again, turning to stare Tubbo down. The other boy doesn’t seem bothered in the slightest. “You know. You- you *know*.”

“I do,” Tubbo answers, and- wow. The only people who knew were Puffy and her hacker, but- but Tubbo *is* her hacker. Of *course*, Tubbo would know.

“That video I took-”

“I’ve been running it through every single database I have access to, and even the ones I don’t. I’ve run a bunch of facial recognition on the guys from that video, too, but most of them showed up in coroners’ offices periodically throughout the night.” Tubbo sips his own drink, and he wipes his hands off on a napkin. How did he finish his burger so fast? “I think whoever is running that group, maybe the mask man-”

“That’s what I’ve been calling him.”

“Is punishing them for not catching you. And I guess punishment is death.”

Tommy takes it all in, and he feels a little triumphant. If all he has to do to get these guys killed is simply not be caught, he can do that. That’s about the only thing he *can* do.

“What’re you scheming over there?” Tubbo asks, and Tommy feels a little grin spread across his face when it pulls at the new bandages the nurses had put on his cheek while he was sleeping.

“I’ve got this crazy idea, right?”

Tubbo’s grin grows to match, and he leans forward. “I’m all ears, boss man.”

## Chapter End Notes

i am neglecting sleep and homework and am in pain buT THE GRIND NEVER STOPS  
BAYBEE LETS GET THIS BREAD WOOOOOO. also if you see spelling errors no  
you don't i have been awake for too long to fix them

time to take my anthro lab quiz :')

still no tags tho. can't remember who i have and haven't said hi to either



# Several Mentally Ill Individuals In A Room

## Chapter Summary

“Are you allowed to drive?”

“Legally? No. Illegally? Yes.”

“I do not feel safe in this car.”

“That’s so sad, let me play you a song on my tiny violin.”

## Chapter Notes

ahaha,,, they do be discussing a suicide that took place. and there is the vaguest mention of child abuse. tw lol

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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“I’m just saying,” Tubbo says, speeding through an intersection that he definitely should not be speeding through. “They’re probably waiting at your apartment to like. I don’t know, ambush you or something. They wouldn’t expect to look for you in their own home.”

His idea is somehow both incredibly stupid and oddly genius. The only people they’d have to worry about are Technoblade and Philza, but they’re hopefully doing Work Things. Tommy is not doing Work Things as he is currently ‘missing,’ and Tubbo is also not doing Work Things because he technically doesn’t have a job.

“I guess so.” They take a sharp turn and Tommy grabs for the Oh Shit We’re Going To Die Handle, and Tubbo laughs a little maniacally. “Are you allowed to drive?”

“Legally? No. Illegally? Yes.”

“I do not feel safe in this car.”

“That’s so sad, let me play you a song on my tiny violin.”

“Please put your hands back on the-” they swerve sharply, and Tommy screams. “-*steering wheel!* Tubbo! The fucking steering wheel!”

“They’re there! Look! Hands, steering wheel!” Tubbo shouts back, looking incredibly pleased with himself for someone who almost just drove into a woman on a scooter. Granted, it’s absolutely that woman’s fault for driving around on a scooter in *L’Manburg* of all places, but he won’t give Tubbo the satisfaction of knowing that.

Had Henry known this was going to be where Tommy ended up -fighting for his life in the passenger seat of a teeny little car flying down the streets of *L’Manburg*- he probably wouldn’t have let him go. Actually- he probably would’ve anyway. He’d seemed so pleased that Tommy had A. eaten, and B. was hanging out with someone his own age. Tommy hasn’t really had friends since they moved here. The move wasn’t supposed to be a permanent thing, so Tommy hadn’t tried to make friends. He’d been under the impression he’d be going home once they merged their company with the *Minecrafts*, but that didn’t really work, now did it?

Now, Tommy’s parents are dead and he’s in hiding, and he’s spending his free time avoiding people who are concerned about his wellbeing with their brother. Their brother who also happens to be the hacker who is trying to hunt down the people who killed Tommy’s parents. Their brother who literally forged all of Tommy’s documents.

What a wild, interesting turn of events.

Tubbo lives in Old *L’Manburg* as well. The house -mansion, this place is fucking huge- is extravagant in ways even Tommy’s isn’t. Unnecessarily high ceilings, balconies, floor to ceiling drapes in deep purples and reds. It’s gorgeous, don’t get him wrong. But it’s also just... a needless display of wealth. Something about it doesn’t sit right with him- the same way his own home doesn’t sit right with him.



He and his parents had always lived well below their means. His parents did a lot of charity work; his mom did a lot of traveling and helping when she wasn't running her gallery or sitting with him on the floor of her crafts room. There was a long time where it was just the three of them in a little three-bedroom flat. It was a fancy little place, sure, but it was just the three of them. They didn't need a lot of room.

They moved there after a 'tragedy' that Tommy had repressed all memories of. Those memories had stayed repressed up until about a week ago, and that was why he really ended up on the roof. He can lie to himself about it being the family that got murdered all he wants, but somewhere under his skin, he knows why he was up there. He knows why he was ready to slip.

"Don't trip," Tubbo tells him as he flicks the light switch for his room, ushering Tommy in with the other hand and hopping on one foot to close the door with his other. Were he not a vigilante, Tommy would think he's oddly agile. "I haven't cleaned in here in a while. Phil makes us take care of our own rooms so the housekeepers don't have to clean up after us excessively."

"That seems a little counterproductive," Tommy comments. His parents were the same way, though, so it really isn't all that surprising.

Tubbo sits down at his computer set-up after passing Tommy a laptop -and holy shit, those are a lot of monitors- and he boots the entire thing up. "That's what Wilbur says, too. He's kind of spoiled. Me and Ranboo think it's because he was born into it. I mean- so was I, but still."

"You were born into wealth?"

"Mhm."

Tommy opens LMU's website and logs into his profile, pulling up the weird little student portal so he can check on the essay he has due tonight. He hasn't started it yet, but it shouldn't be that hard. It's not a research essay, thank fuck. Tommy hates those things.

“My dad died when I was like- twelve I think?” Tubbo continues, two monitors scrolling too fast for Tommy to read while another begins to go through people’s IDs. “And Phil adopted me not long after.”

“Oh shit, we trauma dumping?” Tommy asks, and Tubbo turns slowly in his chair to face him. There’s a little half-smile on his face.

“Considering I *literally* found you on top of your dad’s grave two hours ago, I don’t see why not.”

“Sweet. We love bonding over trauma.”

“I mean, who else are we gonna tell? A therapist?”

A startled laugh kicks its way out of Tommy’s chest, and he pulls the laptop further into his lap. They want his Educated Opinions on the poem they read in class Thursday. He did not read a poem in class on Thursday.

“You know all about my dead parents already,” Tommy tells him as he fucks around with the font and the line-spacing. “Tell me about yours.”

“Bold of you to assume *both* of my parents are dead,” Tubbo shoots back, and Tommy snickers.

“Sorry for wrongfully assuming the mortality of your parents, oh great and powerful vigilante. Please correct my mistake.”

Tubbo snorts, and his fingers fly across one of *-one of*. Mans has two keyboards for some reason- his keyboards while he reads through rapidly appearing text. “Nah, my dad said my mom was dead. Apparently she died giving birth to me or something. And my dad just drank himself into a stroke.”

“Sounds fun.”

“Considering he used to beat me, I think he deserved it.”

Tommy pauses in typing his paragraph, blinking at the little flashing line where his next word will begin. “What a nice guy.”

“He also was dating this guy who was *way* younger than he was. Like, criminally younger. The Warden had it out for him for a long time after he found out.”

“Why was your dad such a shitbag?” Tommy asks into the air between them, and Tubbo laughs under his breath.

“Who even knows, dude. He’s dead and that’s all that really matters now.”

They fall into silence, but it’s not awkward. They’re just two dudes doing whatever it is they’re doing on their computers. Tommy is writing an essay; Tubbo is... definitely typing. Coding, maybe. He’s not even going to pretend to know what Tubbo’s doing.

“I watched someone die before,” Tommy comments out of the blue, and Tubbo’s fingers momentarily pause on their path across the keyboard. He hums to show he’s listening, and then he resumes his typing. “Not my parents, though. Someone else.”

“Oh?”

“You- um. What do you know about Wilbur?”

“Phil’s son Wilbur?”

“Is there another Wilbur you know?”

Tubbo shrugs, but he doesn't turn to face him. “Fair enough. Legally, I know that there was an ‘incident’ when he was around sixteen that makes him kind of spacey sometimes. Illegally, I mean. I know what the incident was. I’m probably not supposed to, but I do.”

Tommy still hasn't started typing again. He's just staring at the flashing line, watching it blink in and out of existence. He can feel his mind trying to slip back into that fun little place where he isn't real, but he kind of wants to tell someone this. He'd never gotten the chance to talk about it with his parents.

“I knew Wilbur. Before all this, I mean. Back when I was younger and I lived in London.”

“That's actually kind of funny considering he basically adores you,” Tubbo comments. “Like-okay. So there's Techno and Ranboo, right? They're close. Me and Wilbur never really had that whole ‘brother bond’ or whatever the way they did. I mean, yeah, me and Wil are close, but not like that. We're brothers, don't get me wrong, but me and Phil always got on way better.”

“So he's- what? Trying to turn *me* into his younger brother?”

“I mean, maybe? Maybe you just- ha. Maybe you just remind him of you.”

Tommy doesn't really like that, if he's being honest. Wilbur thinks Thomas is dead. He's almost- it's almost like he's trying to replace Tommy with himself. He *really* doesn't like that.

“I don't know,” he responds quietly. “The last time he saw me, I was like seven or eight. When we first met he was kind of an ass. Our parents were meeting to discuss merging the companies -yeah, I know. They've been talking about it for *that* long- and they wouldn't let him sit in on the meeting. What kind of teenager wants to babysit a seven-year-old? But they made him come play with me. He was mean enough that he made me cry, and then he started

panicking and apologizing. Promised he'd make it up to me. By the end of it, he would tell me I was like the brother he never had."

"So it was before Phil adopted Technoblade?"

"Yeah."

Tubbo's quiet for a minute, and then he must realize something because Tommy can see him turn in his chair to face him out of the corner of his eye. "What happened? You said there was an end of it."

"They stopped having meetings for a while. Kristin had to go away to do something, and Wilbur got all sad. He killed himself, but I don't think I was supposed to know. He got brought back to life from what I heard, and I mean. He's alive, so. Tada."

"How did you find out?" Tubbo asks. "Did someone tell you? I only found out because Wilbur talks a *lot* when he's drunk. And I've- nevermind. Who told you?"

A pause, and then-

"...I'm the one who found his body."

"You're *what?!'*"

Tommy thumps back to lie on the bed with a laugh, letting the laptop slide off his lap. He can picture it so clearly- it's crazy. That room, the way the lamp looked in the corner. The chair knocked over on the floor. The emotions aren't attached to it anymore, but he still remembers. He still knows.

"Wilbur said he wanted to visit me because I made him feel better, but I think he just wanted a place to do it where his dad wouldn't be watching him all the time. My parents told me he

was sad and I should look out for him, and I didn't really know that meant 'Wilbur is on suicide watch' at the time. I was eight, you know? He sent me out of the playroom to get something, and then I came back in. I was too little to get him down."

"You- Tommy- "

"It's okay. I repressed the entirety of that year, I guess. The therapist my parents made me see said it was better to just let me forget Wilbur even existed. Like- I knew *of* him and everything," he gestures vaguely at the ceiling as he talks, and he doesn't think about why he feels so detached from this. It happened to him, but it doesn't feel like it was *him*. "But I didn't really *know* him anymore. My parents refused to let Philza bring him around me after that. I think they hated Wilbur for what he did."

"So, hold on," Tubbo's leaning forward in his chair, arms on his knees as he stares at him. Tommy simply stares back. "You just- when did you remember all this stuff?"

"About a week ago. It's why I was up on the roof."

"So you've just been sitting on this information for a week? Just- stewing in it? Doesn't that fucking suck?"

Tommy snickers to himself, and another wave of exhaustion rolls over his shoulders. "Oh, it absolutely fucking sucks. The memories don't even feel like mine, but I still remember him so clearly. We really were like brothers. I used to call him Wilby."

"Do you know *why* you remembered them?" Tubbo asks, and Tommy turns back to the ceiling. Why *does* he remember Wilbur now? What could've possibly triggered that?

"Who even knows, man. I'm just going to keep ignoring it."

"That can't be healthy."

“Says the guy who blows people up at least once a week.”

Tubbo pauses, and he makes a face. “Fair.”

“How do you deal with that, huh? Actually killing people?”

“I just don’t think about it, honestly,” he answers with a shrug. “I mean, it used to make me cry when I first started out, and I really tried to avoid doing it. But you reach this point where you realize these guys would have no issue killing you, so why should you have an issue killing them? Phi- uh- the Angel always tells us shit like, ‘if you kill a murderer, there’s still the same number of murderers in the city,’ but a lot of us kill murderers, so. Seems like he’s getting a little too old to understand math.”

Tommy snorts and reaches for the laptop, curling on his side to poke at the keyboard with one hand. “Sounds like the Angel’s got a stick up his ass.”

“I don’t think we’ll ever get it out,” Tubbo mourns sarcastically.

They both go back to their respective tasks for a while, and Tommy even feels himself start to doze off. His hand stills on the keyboard and he tucks his nose into his elbow. Things are calm. The tapping of Tubbo’s keyboard is a much better background noise than the beeping of a heart monitor, in his humble opinion.

He doesn’t get to doze for very long before there’s a sudden vwooping noise and a crash, and Tommy peels his eyes open to glare at the disruption of their peace. It’s Ranboo. He’s surrounded by swirling purple particles that Tommy has only ever seen on TV, and he feels his annoyance grow.

The motherfucker named their cats after himself.

“We still can’t find Tommy,” Ranboo frantically tells Tubbo, and whoops, oh well. He was going to announce his presence, but he kind of wants to see how long it takes Ranboo to notice him. Tubbo slowly turns away from his computer to give Ranboo a deadpan stare. “Wilbur’s still at the apartment just in case, and Techno is talking to Puffy, and Phil’s with Sam, but we can’t-”

“I wonder where he could be,” Tubbo says robotically, not a single hint of inflection in his tone.

“You haven’t found him?” Ranboo all but shouts. “There has to be *something* on your computer, right? Can’t you track his phone?”

“His phone is dead.”

His phone is actually dead; it’s currently charging on Tubbo’s desk.

Ranboo’s hands come up into his hair, and he starts pacing around the room. “Those guys could have gotten him, Tubbo! How are we going to find him -hey Tommy- if they’ve gotten him and his phone is dead? There’s gotta be another way you can track him!”

“Ranboo,” Tubbo soothes slowly, talking to his brother as though he’s speaking to a small child.

“...Yeah?”

“How many people are in this room right now?”

Ranboo glances around the room, clenching and unclenching his fists. “Three.”

Tubbo stares at Ranboo, and he stares back, and then Ranboo whirls on Tommy suddenly as his face practically splits open in shock. How dramatic.



*“Tommy!”*

“You are very loud,” Tommy responds blandly, and Ranboo trips trying to get to him. When the taller boy yanks him practically into his lap to hug him -and *wow* does that hurt his hip- he tries to ignore the way his skin burns. He’s too touch starved for this.

“We thought you were dead,” Ranboo breathes into his hair, arms winding tightly around him and pulling him close. “Where did you *go*? Everyone’s been worried sick, man.”

Tommy wiggles his way out of Ranboo’s hug and curls back up on the bed, tucking his nose into his elbow. Ranboo apparently has not gotten the memo as not even a second later, Tommy’s head is resting on his thigh and there are fingers in his hair.

He could complain about this. He could kick and scream and complain about this- but he’s *tired*.

“You named our fucking cats after yourself, asshole,” Tommy bites quietly, and the fingers in his hair freeze.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Tubbo tries to cover his next laugh with a cough, but he doesn’t do a very good job. “He knows, Ranboo.”

“About- about *everyone*?”

‘Everyone’?

No, you know what? Tommy does not have the time to unpack that right now. He is tired, he's been fed, and the adrenaline from Tubbo's driving is wearing off. He is Taking A Nap and not a soul can stop him.

"Just me and now you since you teleported in here like the world was on fire."

"Come on, man. Tommy was missing. Speaking of- where did you *go*?" Tommy is not answering that. He is sleeping. "Are you sleeping?"

"Yes," he mutters, and Ranboo laughs a little. Some of the tension leaks out of his body.

Ranboo's fingers resume their path through Tommy's curls, and the blunt nails against his scalp make him feel a little sick. The last person to play with his hair-

"I'm just glad you're safe," Ranboo tells him quietly, and yeah. Tommy is going to sleep now.

He doesn't really dream, not really. It's just him and the black pool, but this time, he sinks under its surface. Above him, the water's surface is a gentle silver. It's nice. Then a gray hand comes pushing through its surface, and an arm covered in a yellow sleeve follows it.

The person -he thinks it's a person- that falls through the surface of his pool is all gray except for their yellow sweater. They leak blue from their very hands, and their black, soulless eyes are sad. He doesn't like them.

"Thomas," the thing whispers, reaching out and cupping either side of his face. "Tommy. Toms. I'm so sorry."

Tommy isn't allowed to speak in here. That's the rule: he can't speak or he'll have nightmares. It's a lot like a trade.

“He shouldn’t have made you see that,” it whispers. It’s started to cry. “He needs to- he needs to *see you*. He needs to know it’s you so he can say sorry. He needs to say sorry.”

This is- Tommy knows this guy. This is the Ghost. This is the thing that haunts the streets of L’Manburg some nights. It’s wailing echoes through the streets, and when someone finally tracks down the source, they always find a body. Cold cases decades-old get solved when the Ghost weeps.

“You were so little.”

He doesn’t know what it’s talking about. He doesn’t understand.

“Just a little baby,” it murmurs, and it leans forward to bump its forehead with his. “I couldn’t find you before you remembered, but now you’re here. Now you remember. He needs to remember, too.”

Tommy would like to wake up now, thank you.

His mind must be on his side at the moment because he pops awake the next second, blinking rapidly against the crust in his eyes. He pushes himself up and cringes when the motion irritates his hip, and then Tubbo’s bedroom door opens. Tubbo and Ranboo are both gone.

Technoblade stands in the doorway with a little plastic cup and a glass of water. Tommy’s officially been found, then.

“Sam says you got clipped by a car,” Techno explains indifferently as he offers Tommy the cup and the glass. “They’re painkillers.”

Tommy takes the items into his hands but just stares at Technoblade, and the older man gestures at the floor. When Tommy glances down at where he’s pointed, he finds Wilbur sleeping beside the bed. Oh.

“He’s been out of his mind trying to find you. Don’t go missing again.”

With a scoff, Tommy downs the painkillers and some of the water. He pins Technoblade with a glare. “I can do whatever the fuck I want.”

“It’s common courtesy to answer text messages when people are worried about you,” Techno snipes back, and Tommy rolls his eyes.

“I don’t owe any of you anything. It’s not my fault you all decided to get attached to me.”

Techno just stares at him, brown eyes dull. His eyebrows furrow just a little bit. “You know,” he drawls, “I used to be a lot like you. Thought I could only rely on me.”

“And then you got adopted, right? And everything was all sunshine and rainbows because your new dad had money.” Tommy is really playing with fire here, isn’t he? Granted- he technically isn’t. Technoblade can be as buff as he wants to be; he still couldn’t hurt him if he tried.

“And then I wouldn’t accept help and almost got myself *killed*, hurting everyone who cared about me in the process.”

They stare at each other for a long time, an unstoppable force meeting an immovable object, and Technoblade scoffs.

“Whatever, Tommy. It’s your funeral.”

It *is* his funeral. That’s the best part.

## Chapter End Notes

i updated some of the tags woوو. my shoulder is killing me tho- don't like that. time to microwave the baby and use it as a heating pad

crime boys,,, hhh,,,

# Tfw You're Shaking So Bad Your Organs Move

## Chapter Summary

“I insist,” Philza insists -no, really? Tommy couldn’t tell- like some kind of fucking old-timey villain, and Tommy would like to shrivel up and die, thank you. What’s he supposed to do now, hm? Tell him no again and start an argument in front of his sons? I mean- sure, Tubbo already knows *everything everything, but Philza fucking Minecraft wasn’t supposed to know everything everything. He was just supposed to know everything.*

*This is so fucking confusing. Tommy wants to go back to sleep.*

## Chapter Notes

link to a poll in the endnotes pls participate

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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Once Technoblade leaves the room, Tommy flips the laptop open again and goes back to furiously typing his essay -which he appears to have lost two hours of work time on, lovely- while dutifully ignoring the only other person in the room. It’s not hard to ignore Wilbur, at least not while he’s sleeping. He’s spent the night on the couch in the apartment several times since Tommy’s fun little roof incident, but that’s none of Tommy’s business. As long as Wilbur leaves him alone, he can do whatever he wants.

He doesn’t... he doesn’t *hate* Wilbur or anything. Okay, well. Maybe a little. But not for the whole killing himself thing; Tommy doesn’t even think he was supposed to see that. Wilbur literally sent him out of that room to get something on the other side of the house, and Tommy just chose to give up the search.

That doesn’t make it *better*, but this is how he’s going to process it, so everyone else can suck his dick.

Don't actually, thanks. Tommy is not in the business for romance and sex. Very gross.

He hates Wilbur because he wasn't in the meeting room like he was supposed to be, and that meant he got to live while Tommy's parents didn't. He hates Wilbur because he's rich and spoiled with absolutely *no* idea of what it means to live without wealth. Granted, Tommy hadn't understood it until he made the *choice* to understand it, and that's part of the problem. Most people don't have that choice. People like Violet and Shroud.

Did Wilbur know Tommy had a fuckton of money to his name when he offered him the scholarship? No. Is Tommy still going to hate him for it anyway? Yes.

Once he finishes his paper, he grabs for his phone that Tubbo must have left on the bed for him and powers it back on. When he opens up the messaging app, he cringes at the number of messages from Sam. He should... he should *really* answer Sam. It's the nice thing to do.

However, Tommy is not nice, so he turns off his phone and shuts off the laptop, sliding off the bed and narrowly avoiding stepping on Wilbur's face. Whoops. Forgot he was there. He steps over Wilbur's sleeping form -thank you long legs, you are a savior this day- and shimmies the door open, and then he follows the sound of voices downstairs.

He's having a pretty good time, all things considered. His essay is done, he got a nap in, he ate food and he's actually hungry again, and he's taken some pain medication. It must've been a pretty high dosage because his hip doesn't ache when he walks. It's nice. Tommy's doing pretty good.

And then he steps into the dining room where the voices had led him, and he makes eye contact with *the* Philza Minecraft for the first time in months. The last time he spoke to Philza, he and his parents were out to lunch with the man eight months ago. He hasn't seen him in person since.

Philza stops talking to stare at him, and terror surges through Tommy's chest when he watches recognition followed by relief wash over the older man's face. He watches the way that relief is swallowed by confusion- a furrow of his brows, and Tommy feels what little bit of ease he'd felt after waking up and finishing his essay drip into the soles of his shoes. He's been caught.

“Tommy- my boys said your name was. Sam said you hurt your hip, why don’t you come into the next room and let me take a look at it?” Philza says, all kind smiles and tense shoulders. Tommy can feel the way his hands are starting to shake again, can feel his lungs stuttering to take in the proper amount of air. Technoblade, Tubbo, and Ranboo have all turned to watch him from where they’re sitting at the island counter.

“It’s alright,” Tommy does his best to reassure, licking over his bottom lip which he keeps biting until it bleeds and making direct eye contact with Philza. “Really. I appreciate it, though.”

“I insist,” Philza insists -no, really? Tommy couldn’t tell- like some kind of fucking old-timey villain, and Tommy would like to shrivel up and die, thank you. What’s he supposed to do now, hm? Tell him no *again* and start an argument in front of his sons? I mean- sure, Tubbo already knows *everything* everything, but Philza fucking Minecraft wasn’t supposed to know *everything* everything. He was just supposed to know everything.

This is so fucking confusing. Tommy wants to go back to sleep.

“Cool,” Tommy croaks, forcing a smile as Philza grins at him. The older man nods in the direction of a set of double doors to his right -Tommy’s left- and Tommy follows him into the next room. And then the next. And the next.

Tommy’s seen pictures kind of like these ones before. He’s seen the woman with dark hair and her flowing purple gowns in person. He’s seen the younger version of Philza, he’s seen the teenager version of Wilbur. The ones with Technoblade in them, hair dark like Wilbur’s to the point where they could’ve been twins? Tommy never met the teenage version of Technoblade.

Philza didn’t start adopting kids until after Wilbur came back to life. Tommy doesn’t question how he did it- he doesn’t care. But Wilbur can’t be alone, and Philza made sure he never would be.

What appears to be the final set of double doors closes behind them, and Tommy glances around the third formal sitting room they passed through. It’s nice. The chairs look extra



plush.

There's a crow(?) sitting on the windowsill outside. Pop off, queen. Live your best life.

"Thomas," Phil begins, hands spread flat on a chess table as he simply stares at him from across the room. He seems relieved.

He seems angry.

"We thought you were *dead*."

"That was the intention," Tommy answers with a shrug, shaking hands tucked into the pocket of his hoodie.

"We could've- we could've *helped you*, Thomas," Phil breathes. He goes to step around the chess table, and Tommy steps away. "You've been *alone* all this time! It's a miracle we even found you in the first place- if Wilbur hadn't come into Sam's cafe that day- *Thomas*-"

Tommy just shakes his head a little, scrunching and un-scrunching his face to get some pent-up energy out of his body. It doesn't work. "It's Tommy now. As far as- as far as anyone is concerned, Thomas is dead in the L'Manburg harbor. Thomas couldn't handle the death of his parents -couldn't handle the fact that he was the only one who had to suffer- so he left his father's funeral and walked into the harbor."

Phil's face falls from relieved anger to shallow horror. "So what they said..."

"You know, Philza," he starts, huffing a quiet laugh as he trembles so hard he can feel his organs moving. That's such a bad feeling, but it's happening. He's shaking real great now. "You and Wilbur were supposed to be in that conference room, too. You were supposed to be there, but you *canceled*. Why'd you do that, hm? Why didn't you guys show up?"

“We were having transportation issues,” Philza answers, brows furrowing in confusion. “We would’ve-”

“Don’t care!” Tommy shouts back. “You were supposed to *be there*, and you *weren’t*, and now *I’m* the only one who has to live with the fact that people I love are *dead!*”

There are angry tears burning in Tommy’s eyes, there are tremors in his hands, his hip hurts with how badly he’s tensed. Philza is just staring at him in quiet contemplation, but then there’s that dawning realization. That lighting up that comes with realizing something, and then it dampens when the thing you realize isn’t good.

“You want us to be dead?” Philza asks carefully, hands still spread flat on the chess table. They’re meant to be kept in view, Tommy knows that.

“No,” he answers, and he finds that he means it. His voice breaks when he tries to speak again, though. “But- but I want someone else to *hurt* like I am, Philza. I want- I want someone to know what it’s like to- to bury your father on your *eighteenth birthday*. To kneel on the floor of a high-rise office and feel your mom’s fucking *brains* slide down your cheeks. Your sons get to be *happy*, Philza, and I *don’t* and I can’t- I *can’t*-”

Philza steps around the chess table slowly, hands held out in front of him. That somber realization is gone, and through Tommy’s tears, all he can see is pity. Pity and- and something else that Tommy can’t fucking *stand*.

“Thomas,” Philza croons, and he sounds like Tommy’s *dad*, and he’s crumbling to pieces in the arms that circle him before he can even think to shove the older man away.

He doesn’t want to; that’s the thing. He doesn’t like Philza, and he doesn’t like being in his house, and he doesn’t like being touched by him but he’s so- he’s so *tired*. He misses his parents and he misses his friends and he misses everything he’ll never get to have again. He misses sitting with his mom in the sunroom and setting up the easel. He misses painting her when the sun would bathe her hair in gold. He misses listening to his dad pluck at guitar strings even after he’d forgotten how to play, and he misses listening to his mom sing out of tune.

“You’re allowed to be angry, Thomas,” he whispers, both arms tight around Tommy’s shoulders. Tommy tucks his face down into Philza’s shoulder with a choked gasp, but he doesn’t return the hug. “You’re allowed to be hurt, and you’re allowed to want other people to hurt, too. It’s okay. What happened to you wasn’t fair.”

“It wasn’t,” Tommy sobs his agreement, and Philza’s laugh is soft. Sad.

“Being upset, being *hateful*, those things are okay. They’re *normal*. When Wilbur died, I was the same way.”

Tommy hugs himself tighter, leaning further into Philza and letting the other man take his weight. “But you got him back.”

“I did,” he whispers, “and I got lucky. I *know* I got lucky. But Thomas, I *get it*. You’re not- I know how easy it is to isolate yourself, but you’re not alone in this. We’ll be here for you in any way you’ll let us.”

The vast majority of his insides feel all twisted up and wrong, but it is what it is. Tommy’s all good, baby. Living his best life. Definitely not waiting for death to smack him in the face with a crowbar.

Hm... a crowbar. That could be a good thing to start carrying around with him if the Reapers decide they want to fuck with him again. They can’t hurt him, but that doesn’t mean he can’t hurt them.

Uh oh. Morbid thought, that one. Time to think about other things.

“You really do need to call me Tommy, though,” he tells Philza quietly, stepping away and pulling his hands from his pockets to rub at the tears on his face. He may have already wiped his nose on Philza’s fancy dress shirt, but that’s what he gets for hugging Tommy when he’s already emotional. He’s cried so much in the last day and a half, he can feel a headache forming.

“If I have to call you Tommy, you have to call me Phil,” Phil with no za answers, glancing at his snotty shoulder in the mirror on one of the walls and not even wincing. Tommy supposes fatherhood will do that to a person. Phil sees him looking, and he smiles. “Once, when Wilbur was a baby, he spit up directly into my hand. It was the only time I considered putting him up for adoption.”

“That’s disgusting,” Tommy mutters, and Phil barks a laugh.

“It is, isn’t it?”

Tommy still kind of hates him like. a lot. But he also feels a little better now, all things considered. The pain meds Technoblade gave him are kicking in for real, but the exhaustion from crying for a second time in such a short amount of time is getting to him. Phil must see him physically droop because his smile turns all soft.

“Would you like to stay here tonight?”

Absolutely *not*, thank you. Fuck that.

“No thanks,” Tommy murmurs, shrugging one shoulder and fiddling with the strings of his hoodie. “Kind of want to head back to my apartment, if that’s alright.”

“Of course, yeah. Let me call one of our drivers, they’ll take you home.” Phil is still being all gentle and kind, nudging Tommy toward the door without actually touching him, letting him say goodbye to Ranboo and Tubbo -Technoblade is gone, and Wilbur is likely still sleeping- and then walking him to the car waiting in the driveway.

The driver rolls down his window just as Tommy looks up from his phone, and they both freeze.

It’s... it’s the driver from the building. The one for the Reapers.

Every ounce of feeling a little better is the equivalent of violently projectile vomited directly onto the driveway, minus the whole projectile vomiting thing. It just gives him that feeling of dread you'd get upon realizing you're about to vomit in public. Or maybe the kind that comes with realizing one of the men responsible for your parents' death is currently employed by the man who just promised he was there for you. Probably the second one, now that Tommy's thinking about it.

The driver stares at him for a moment, and Tommy stares back. Terror is steadily leaking into his veins as the driver finally appears to recognize him, and then Tommy is backpedaling as quickly as he can.

"On second thought, I'll- uh. I'll call Sam. Sam will come get me."

Phil glances at the driver and then at Tommy, brows furrowing down. "Are you sure?" He seems so kind still, but his driver is *literally* one of the guys who orchestrated the death of Tommy's parents. He doesn't seem like he knows, but there's still pure, cold fear burbling softly in his veins.

"I'm sure, yeah," he's already yanking out his phone, backing away from the car as quickly as he can and rushing inside. The driver can't kill him, but he's still. He's still so *scared*. Yeah, sure, maybe this guy can't hurt him, but he can scare the shit out of him by simply breathing. He abandons Phil in the foyer and books it to a bathroom he remembers passing, locking the door behind him and sinking to a crouch in the fancy walk-in shower as he dials Sam's number.

It rings for... for a long time. So long that Tommy thinks he might not answer, and then he can hear the call go through.

"Hello?" Sam mumbles, and he sounds groggy. Tommy woke him up. It's not that late but- but Sam said he wasn't going to sleep until he knew Tommy was safe. Someone must have told him Tommy'd been found and now he's gone and- and woken him up.

There's the sound of shifting, of Sam pulling the phone away from his ear, and then his voice sounds a lot more awake. "*Tommy? Is that you?*"

He's so *sick* of crying.

"Hi," he whispers back, shoving his sleeve into his mouth so he doesn't sob all over again. He can hear Sam moving around again, and the volume changes as Sam must put him on speakerphone.

*"Are you alright? Where are you? Do you need help?"*

Yes, Tommy wants to say, but he woke Sam up. He didn't mean to do that. "No. I mean- um." There go the stupid tears making his voice break, and Tommy wants to end his own career right then and there. "Do you know how I can contact the Warden, perchance?"

There's a pause, and then Sam's voice is loud again. Probably close to the phone. *"Are you in trouble?"*

"No." Yes.

*"Then why do you need the Warden, Tommy? What's going on?"* Sam pauses as Tommy sniffles a little, and he can almost *hear* the man on the other side of the phone frowning. *"Are you crying? Tommy, kid, what's wrong?"*

"A lot," Tommy nearly weeps back, and Sam's moving again. "I'm at Phil's house and he- he knows who I am but his driver is *bad* and I don't want to be here but I can't go home- what if they're waiting for me at the apartment? But I can't stay here because they're here too and Sam I'm gonna- I can't- *Sam-*"

*"Breathe, kiddo,"* Sam whispers, soft and kind like Phil had been earlier. *"Do you need me to come get you?"*

So many questions, always on the mark. Tommy *does* need to be gotten. He needs to be saved and he needs to be helped and he needs to be held.

But he doesn't want to be selfish. He already woke Sam up.

*"It'd make me feel better if you let me come get you,"* Sam says gently, and Tommy feels himself nodding.

"Please save me," he whispers to a man who owns a cafe and dyes his hair green and loves fluffy dogs. Sam can't do anything, but he saved him yesterday. Maybe he can do it again today.

*"I'll be there as soon as I can."*

Phil doesn't know that those men are in his house, or at least, Tommy doesn't think he does. *Tubbo* can't know, or else he'd have informed the Angel and Puffy and everyone else. Nobody knows except him again. It's always falling on him and his stupid brain that never forgets faces -except Wilbur, of course. His brain loved getting rid of Wilbur- to remember these people who have caused nothing but harm.

What if they're after the Minecraft family now? What if they're going to take them out the same way they took out Tommy's family?

Were they- were the Reapers in Tommy's home? No, no. He would've seen them. He would've known.

So... so why doesn't anybody else?

## Chapter End Notes

dad poll: [which dad do yall want for tommy](#).

i had my mom zap my shoulder today and it helped for long enough for me to type half of this and the rest got done on my phone i hate being alive i am in so much p a i n

stfu about spelling errors hey lani



# We In This Bitch, Finna Get Crunk

## Chapter Summary

Nope. No panicking right now. He is activating his Stealth Mode.

“...Tommy?”

Fuck. Shit fuck fucking shit ass bitch fuck SHIT.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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Tommy is sitting on one side of Sam’s couch, knees pulled up to his chest as he watches the weird cartoon character bounce along the screen. They’re making music of some kind, singing a little song, but Tommy can’t really hear it outside of indiscernible background noise. Quiet humming.

On the other end of the couch, Sam is halfway to dozing off. He’d been trying to stay awake and get Tommy to talk, but he’d underestimated just how good Tommy was at clamming up. It just takes a little bit of shaking, a little locking your jaw and crossing your arms, a teeny hint of closing off your body language to make sure the other person knows you don’t want to talk.

Sam’s the exact opposite now even if his head *does* keep dropping out of his hand every time he almost falls asleep. He’s turned ever so slightly toward Tommy on the couch, one arm over the back and failing to prop up his head while the other struggles to keep a hold on his phone. Legs straight out on the coffee table. Tommy’s been half watching him from the corner of his eye while drumming his fingers on his shins where he’s wrapped his arms around his legs.

He wants Sam to go to sleep. He wants to leave.

He woke Sam up, and that’s not fair.

It would've made more sense to stay at the Minecraft house, but the thought of seeing another one of the Reapers in their home had been terrifying. He knows- fucking hell does he *know* that they can't hurt him. That doesn't change the fact that every single time he sees one of their faces, he's seeing the blood spurting from his dad's neck, or feeling *actual brain matter* drip down his face. He wanted to stay in that house, he wanted to believe Phil *so bad*, but there are too many unknowns. Too many ways something can go wrong.

His phone buzzes when Wilbur texts him again. Apparently, he'd woken up not long after Tommy left.

*You're sure you don't want me to?*

Wilbur wants to come stay at the apartment with him for a few days in about two weeks time because Ranboo is going on a little trip with Tubbo right before Halloween. Tommy knows he's just afraid he'll kill himself with no one there to watch him, and he's not... he's not *wrong*. If he had the ability to do it, he probably would. You could almost say he learned from the best, ha.

It's not funny.

*im okay*

He pauses, though, watching the way the three dots chase each other as Wilbur types back. On the other end of the couch, Sam picks his head back up again, and Tommy pretends to be engrossed in his phone. He'll have the cafe while Ranboo and Tubbo are gone, but he doesn't... want to be alone. It's a cold shock to his system, ice dropping into his stomach, but he really doesn't want to be alone.

*actually you can come*

*Really??*

*Thank you :D*

He doesn't hate Wilbur. He knows he should, knows he should be so full of resentment for Wilbur taking away an entire *year* of his childhood, but he also kind of gets it now, in a way. The need to just... go away. To *stop*. The exhaustion that comes with feeling like this- he gets it. He just probably wouldn't have chosen to do it in an eight-year-old's playroom, but whatever. Wilbur was just desperate.

Stupid and selfish and horrible, but desperate. Not excuses, his mom used to say. Just explanations. Excuses expect forgiveness while explanations ask. They don't demand to be forgiven; they simply want to be understood. Understanding doesn't mean he has to forgive Wilbur, and he doesn't. He probably never will.

But Tommy, as much as he uses it to survive, is getting kind of sick of being angry. He misses when all he knew how to do was love.

Sam's head drops out of his hand again, cheek smushed into his own shoulder, and he doesn't pick it back up this time. His phone slips out of his other hand to rest on his leg.

Tommy stays where he is even when adrenaline starts to thrum in his veins again, reaching for the remote and turning the volume up the tiniest bit. After a few minutes, he does it again, and again, until it's loud enough to cover the sound of his footsteps when he decides to get up. Sam sleeps through all of it, and Tommy feels even worse for keeping him awake for so long. He shouldn't have called him- he should've called Henry but Henry told him he'd be going away this week and-

Nope. No panicking right now. He is activating his Stealth Mode.

Sam keeps his ringer on All The Time. It's obnoxious and it drives him crazy at work, but Tommy knows for a fact that Sam has his contact set to come through even when it's on do

not disturb. Tommy doesn't want to disturb him, so he has to very stealthily turn off Sam's ringer long enough to text him that he's leaving and then turn it back on. He doesn't want Sam to panic again. Maybe he should-

"...Tommy?"

Fuck. Shit fuck fucking shit ass bitch fuck SHIT.

"Sorry," Tommy whispers back, moving to shuffle back to his side of the couch only for the arm Sam had had on the back of the couch to come down gently on Tommy's shoulders. The limb is heavy, though, and Sam looks like he's struggling to stay awake when Tommy peers at him through the blond curls that cover his forehead.

"You okay?" Sam asks, and Tommy cringes. He's so concerned and Tommy was *literally* just trying to steal his phone so he could sneak out of his house. He doesn't move his arm, and the heat from it is leaking into Tommy's shoulders.

"I'm okay," he answers, trying to decide if shuffling away is a good idea or not. If he moves too much, Sam will be even more awake. "I didn't mean to wake you up."

Sam's jaw pops as he turns away to yawn into his other hand, and he scrubs roughly at one of his eyes. "You're fine, kid," he mutters. "You can sit over here if you want. I don't mind."

That's code for "I'm a dad and if you want me to hold you I will," and it makes Tommy's chest get all tight. He doesn't *want* to be held. He's gotten like- two hugs in the past six months and they've both been within the last week. Does Sally holding him count? He doesn't think so. So yeah, two hugs in the last six months.

Okay. So. Maybe he *does* want to be held. Maybe he didn't want to let Watergirl go, and maybe he really wanted to hug Phil back. Maybe he wants to let Sam hold him. He's touch-starved and his skin burns every time he's touched but he wants to be held *so bad*.

Sam must take his silence as an answer because he grasps Tommy's shoulder a little tighter and pulls him against his side, exhaling heavily when Tommy sinks into the couch beside him.

Right. Tommy's here now, and he can't move until Sam falls asleep again. Totally not a problem, he can handle this so well. He's a master of handling circumstances that come out of nowhere. Mhm. Yup.

LIES. TOMMY IS *LYING*. This is TERRIBLE. How is he supposed to think straight when his shitty little pea-brain is overheating at the fact he's being given any kind of casual affection at all? How is he meant to be extra sneaky if Sam now has an arm *around his shoulders*? The man's head is half leaning on his.

Is Tommy stuck here now? He's not stuck here, right? He's fine. Totally fine.

He's a little less fine when, twenty minutes later, he finally manages to slink out from under Sam's arm and back to the other side of the couch. He's a little less fine when his body actually *protests* moving away.

Tommy is not a *bitch*, he doesn't need to be *held*. He's a big man. He's fine. He brings Sam's phone with him as he slides back across the couch and flicks the ringer off, pulling out his own phone to shoot Sam a text saying he's leaving. He watches it come through, and he tries not to think about the nickname.

*Toms:*

*im gonna head back to the apartment*

*i dont want to wake you up so im just gonna use your spare key*

*thank you for coming to get me*

Oh shit. Fuck. He's not planning on going home, and Sam's gonna want him to text him when he gets home which he *isn't doing*, so what's he going to do now?? He already sent the message!! How is he going to get out of this one?

He could always just. wait. However long it takes to get back to the apartment from here - apparently fiftyish minutes, but taking the subway would cut that in half. Thank you maps app- he could spend it sitting here on the couch. He'd have to calculate the time it would take to walk to the subway and then to his apartment as well. Sam is still sleeping. Fran is at work with Sam's partner, Ponk, doing some part time work as a therapy animal for the kids at the hospital, so there's no one here to make much of a fuss if Tommy leaves. No Fran to bark at him, no Ponk to do... something. He hasn't met Ponk yet. They seem nice, though.

Sam always smiles when he talks about him. That's enough.

So Tommy sits in his corner of the couch and tucks his face into his knees, and he waits. He watches the new cartoon dance on the screen for a while, and then he glances at Sam, and then he looks back at the TV. He looks away, looks back. Away. Back. TV. Sam.

The anxiety roiling in his stomach reaches a peak at the forty-five minute mark and Tommy texts Sam's phone again, watching the message come through on the lock screen and then flicking the ringer back on. He did it. Now it's time to leave.

Sam told him where the spare key was in the event Tommy needed to come inside when he wasn't home, and Tommy appreciates that. He really does. But Sam still thinks Tommy is some foster kid with a troubled past -one of these things is partially true- and Tommy feels awful for lying to him. Maybe he should- hm. Maybe he should tell Sam. Tubbo knows, and so does Phil, and the world hasn't blown up yet. And now he has *three* people he can talk to about all this. Maybe it's good.

Nevermind. If Tommy's going to be passing go and collecting two hundred dollars after he pulls the plug on his mother's life support, it's best not to get attached. It's best not to let them get attached to him, either.

...Considering Sam just came to rescue him, and Wilbur passed out on the floor of the room Tommy was staying in, and Ranboo *literally* exposed his secret identity because he was so stressed about Tommy being missing, it might be a little too late for that. Fuck.

Oh well. Time to be Super Sneaky and avoid all of his problems.

Tommy slinks off of the couch like an absolute legend, not wincing at all when Sam hums and readjusts the way his head is lying. Tommy inches further off the couch once he's stopped moving, and he pads near-silently to the front door where he slips his shoes back on. The locks click as Tommy opens them, and then he freezes to listen for any movement.

Nothing. He steps into the cool October air, and he shuts the front door behind him as quietly as he can. He did it. He made it out. Now it's time to play the fun game of Where In The Fuck Is The Spare Key?

The spare key turns out to be buried almost a foot down under a spiky bush -ouch- and Tommy dusts it off on his sweatpants before locking the door. Then he drops the key back into the hole and puts the dirt back, pushing dead leaves and mulch overtop of it.

He. doesn't know what to do now. He'd come out here with the intention of finding the Warden, or someone else, but he can't contact anyone like this.

Except for Dream. He has Dream's number. Dream the "villain". Dream who came into the cafe last week with the Blade to get coffee at one in the morning. The two of them had helped Tommy with his math homework that night.

So, in the event Tommy doesn't find anyone else, he'll message Dream. Time to walk his funky little self to the subway and get back to the inner city because he is Not going to be walking all the way out there, thanks. This city is too fucking big to walk all the way there from the suburbs.

Tommy's shoulders still kind of burn a little bit, but it is what it is. He's all good, baby. There's a little piece of him that wants to sneak back into Sam's house and crawl back under his arm, but he already texted the man and told him he got home. Part of him wants to text Tubbo or Ranboo and ask if he can come back inside.

Maybe Tubbo and Ranboo are patrolling? It'd kind of suck to run into them because they know who he is and they think he went to Sam's house- which he did! He did *actually* go to Sam's house. He just snuck out and made it so he couldn't go back. Self-sabotage and all that.

He fiddles with the fun little plant game he downloaded a while ago as he sits cross-legged on the subway, listening to the sound of the wheels as they screech and roll over the track. It's not as nice as the stupid cartoon show that Sam had on as background noise, or the fan Ranboo sleeps with at night, but Tommy's not in the business of thinking too hard about things he can't have.

When he exits the subway, the buildings that tower over him- oh my god. Oh my fucking god. He has school in the morning. He just fucking remembered that he has school in the morning- god fucking shit. This is a terrible day. Granted, he wouldn't have slept anyway, but he forgot he had to actually go to school. When is fall break, hm?? When is it his turn to be happy?

Never, probably. Moving on.

Tommy wanders his way down the sidewalks with his eyes to the skyline, scanning the tops of the buildings for any sign of a hero, vigilante, or villain. Or anything in between, honestly. He is a man with a plan and that plan involves somebody who can help him out, and that someone is-

"Shut the fuck *up*, Techno!" Techno as in... *Technoblade*? Technoblade is out here right now? Isn't he supposed to be at his house? Why is he out here?

"You're just mad because you lost, Dream," Technoblade drawls back, and Tommy peers around the edge of the recently condemned tiny apartment building to see the fucking *Blood God* standing on a stoop of yet another condemned building. This street got taken out by an actual bombing not too long ago- no one is supposed to be out here.

Dream is standing across from the Blade on a crushed car, and they're both panting. Were they fighting? Sparring? Tommy doesn't know.

"You're the one that said no powers," Dream snarks back, hopping off the car and rolling his shoulders. "Come on, Techno. Let me use my powers next time."

Technoblade laughs- and it *is* Technoblade, wow. Their whole family must be heroes, haha.



...

.....

Tommy is going to smash his head against a brick wall. It'd be one thing if it was just Tubbo and Ranboo; he could excuse two out of five. We've crossed into three out of five though, and that's kind of. That sure is a statistic, mhm. It is. Yes.

Three out of five of them are living double lives. How much does Tommy want to bet that Wilbur and Phil are, too? He would bet a lot, probably. There's a lot of this he could bet on.

Instead, he watches Technoblade and Dream banter, watches them laugh, and then he turns on his heel and heads back toward the subway. What a fun little thing to find out. This hasn't skewed Tommy's perspective of this family at all, nope.

Wilbur could be Phantom, maybe. Or Monarch. Though Monarch's whole "stealing from the rich" thing really doesn't fit Wilbur's vibe. Would he be Phantom, then? Would that make sense?

And what about Phil? Who could Phil be? Who does Phil remind him of?

Tommy doesn't want to think about this anymore, honestly. Doesn't want to think about their double lives nor his own. He sinks down in his seat on the train and pulls out his phone, opening his messages with Tubbo with a small wince.

*hey big man  
phil said you guys have multiple drivers  
im pretty sure one of them is a reaper*

????

*hes the same guy who was driving the other day  
he chased me in the car  
he was parked outside the office building*

*oh shit  
im looking at the cameras and the sketches  
oh SHIT*

*you see him?*

*yea*

*i think there might be more of them in your house  
i dont know for sure  
what do we do??*

*im gonna do fancy undercover things  
bc im nuclear  
ahaha*

*please be safe*

*always am*

Tommy doesn't think he is, but that's not important. As long as he doesn't get himself killed.  
As long as-

He's attached. Tommy's attached and these people aren't who they say they are but neither is he, and just. Everything is a mess. Everything is a complete *disaster* because he's *attached*.

Fuck. He sure has a lot to unpack with that therapist he doesn't have.

## Chapter End Notes

watching that poll immediately switch from awesamdad to dadza in a matter of hours was fucking hilarious. i literally slept for three hours, woke up and went :0 bc it did such a complete 180

also i cant tweet out the link rn bc one of my tweets is blowing up and people are following me and im SCARED OF THEM im very sorry if you rely on the link to read the new chapters

once again, don't care about spelling mistakes. ily

# Final Will & Testament

## Chapter Summary

"What? You obsessed with me or something?"

"Looking like that? How couldn't I be?"

## Chapter Notes

for those of you who need it: cw for weed use i guess

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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"I want to set up another scholarship," Tommy mumbles, pulling his many jackets tighter around himself and rolling over to press his freezing nose into Ranboo's shoulder. Tubbo picks his head up to peer over Ranboo at Tommy, his own cheeks bright red with the cold. It's only a few days before Halloween; Tubbo and Ranboo will be leaving for their little trip tomorrow morning.

"You do?" Tubbo asks, similarly pressing his nose into Ranboo's other shoulder. "Like, for one person?"

"I don't know." I mean, listen, okay? He really doesn't know. "I'm not sure. I was thinking-like. I was thinking maybe a lot of them. People like Violet."

They're on the roof- the three of them. Ranboo confessed he'd never been high before and Tommy wasn't just going to let that stand, so he'd bought some weed off one of the kids in his new creative writing class. It hadn't been that hard. The hardest part had been letting Tubbo convince Ranboo to come smoke with them on the roof, but things are good now.

It's safe to say they got him up there in the end. He's gotten high for the first time and now he's sleeping it off like a rock in between them, and though they'd had their fun with doodling little cats -and other things- on his face, they're relaxing now. Enjoying themselves despite the fact that this will be the last time they get to hang out until a couple of weeks from now. Ranboo and Tubbo's trip is longer than it was supposed to be. They'll be gone for a long time.

It's like- it's like losing a safety net. He's spent nearly every day with at least Tubbo since the whole. Dad's grave thing or whatever. And after a few days of trying to be secretive and generally failing, they'd told Ranboo about everything. It's not like they couldn't have kept it a secret, it was more like Tommy just- didn't want to anymore.

It finally opened that door, and now he doesn't want to shut it.

So Ranboo knows. And so does Tubbo, and so do Phil and Puffy. Tommy can admit that having a support system is kind of nice.

It'll suck when he and death finally do their dance, but he can pretend that won't happen for now. He can have fun with this while it lasts.

"I could probably make some kind of program or... or something," Tubbo mumbles. He brings the sleeve of the hoodie he's wearing -he, too, has several on, all of which are Tommy's that he's stolen- and covers his face to try and keep his cheeks warm. "It'll go through school records and other stuff. Finances. Family history. It's actually really fucking invasive if you think about it."

"Tubbo-"

"-I mean, really! I know everything about them-"

"-Tubbo."

“Sorry. Actually, no I’m not. We never said I was a good person.” Tubbo’s just grinning at him as he talks, so lazy and content and happy that it makes Tommy want to *cry*, but he doesn’t. He’s happy right now. He’s with two of his best friends. “Anyway. It’s really easy to make a program that’ll sort the people who would qualify for the uh- the ‘Kraken Scholarship.’ That’s a fun name.”

“Yeah,” Tommy lulls. He watches Tubbo turn to look at the sky even though there aren’t any stars to see in the city, and then he looks over Ranboo’s sleeping face. “Danger Scholarship just makes it seem like they’re dangerous.”

These two will be gone for just over three weeks, and a lot can happen in that span of time. Tubbo will still be working remotely, obviously, and they’ll still text a bunch but. You never know, you know? Maybe all the Reapers will be found in two weeks. Maybe Tommy will be dead in three.

You never know.

“I am very cold,” Ranboo grumbles between them as his eyes flutter open, and Tommy muffles his laugh into his shoulder. Tubbo openly cackles as he forces himself to sit up. “I wanna go inside.”

“Is the baby cold?” Tommy teases, sitting up as well, and Ranboo groans. He grabs one of his taller friend’s arms while Tubbo grabs the other, and they pull their noodle of a friend into a sitting position.

“I’m older than you,” he mumbles back, and Tubbo laughs again.

“I’m older than both of you.”

“We know, Tubbo.”

Out of everyone Tommy knows right now, he's the youngest. Tubbo and Ranboo don't really treat him any different because of it, but a lot of *literally* everyone else does. Wilbur and Sam and Dream. Those three are the worst with their babying, but Tommy finds that, sometimes, he doesn't mind it. He won't ever say anything about that to them.

They barely make it back through Ranboo's window before their friend is curling up on his bed and going back to sleep, ignoring them and the rest of the world. Kind of lame in Tommy's ever humble opinion, but it is what it is. The guy's not built for things like this.

Tommy follows Tubbo back out into the living room where they're greeted by several little meows, and Tommy stoops to let Enderpearl pad her little way into his arms. She's getting big- almost ten whole weeks old. Enderchest follows Tubbo onto the couch and stretches out beside him when he pulls his laptop out of his bag and props it up on his lap. Tommy sits down on the other side of the couch, kicking his feet out on the coffee table and ignoring the feet that in turn get shoved under his thigh.

"What're you doin'?" he mumbles, and Tubbo barely shrugs as his fingers fly across the keyboard.

"Setting up that program I told you about," he answers. "It really isn't that hard."

Tommy rubs his thumb on Enderpearl's forehead and smiles softly when she closes her eyes. He doesn't look at Tubbo when he asks his next question. "Can I ask you something? Something else- don't get smart with me."

Tubbo snickers, but he doesn't look up, either. "Shoot."

"Why is it so difficult for you guys to find the Reapers?"

There's nothing for a while outside of the tapping of Tubbo's keys and the quiet purring of the cats, Ranboo's weird fan a rumbling background noise through his closed door. Tommy tilts his head back and stares up at the ceiling, tracing over the little dots and divots that seem all the more prominent in the light of the green lava lamp Dream had given him a week ago.

Tommy's not sure *why* he gave him a lava lamp, but he'd said he wanted to. It's got his signature little smile painted on the bottom.

The silence isn't a bad one. It's not tense or terrifying or wrong- there's no judgment behind it. It's an honest kind of curiosity, tilting on its axis and peeking around corners into places it can't go but can just barely see. But it's heavy, and it hurts. These are the people who killed Tommy's parents. These are the people who are apparently employed by the Minecrafts.

"The driver you saw disappeared right after you left," Tubbo answers after a while of just typing, glancing away from his screen to meet Tommy's eyes when he turns. His fingers pause in their movements; the cats stop purring. "We've been trying to hunt them down, but we didn't know this group existed until like. two weeks ago. They're almost unnaturally good at covering their tracks. Every time we think we've caught up to them, it's just a dead body or a dead-end."

"Oh."

It makes sense even if it absolutely fucking sucks. Even if they *had* known about them for longer -six fucking months, that's how long this group has been running around- it wouldn't have been guaranteed they could have found anything. There's a good chance the Reapers have metahumans on their side, and there's no telling what their enhancements could be.

They're shooting in the dark.

"That's why Ranboo and I are going away for a while," Tubbo explains, and he wiggles his feet to get Tommy's attention. "Phil has some ideas, but that means we have to go explore the 'old family home' for all the records that haven't been turned into electronic files. Apparently, there are a lot, and it'll take me longer to read them since I can't convert them to the right font."

"I get that," Tommy mumbles back. He swats Tubbo's feet away and turns on the couch to face him, trying to figure out where to put his legs so he can actually relax without crowding in Tubbo's space. "Have any of them figured out that I know yet?"



“What? About their horribly concealed secret identities? Nah.” He pauses, squinting a little before going back to his laptop. “Well, Ranboo kind of let it slip to Techno that you heard Dream calling him his name. Wilbur thought it was the funniest thing even though Techno kept trying to convince him they needed to get rid of you now- which won’t happen by the way. Phil is worried you’re going to figure it out now that you know who Techno is.”

Tommy snickers as he shuts his eyes, a little grin forming on his face. “I mean- to be fair, that’s *literally* what tipped me off that all of you were living double lives. Although I probably wouldn’t’ve figured it out if Ranboo hadn’t fuckin’ appeared out of nowhere in your room.”

Tubbo laughs as well, and he shakes his head. “Not his fault you were just in his house when you were supposed to be missing.”

“Fuck you! I could be missing if I wanted to be.”

“The entire time you’ve been ‘missing’ this year, I’ve been tracking your phone.”

Tommy stops, peeling one eye open to squint at Tubbo who is already grinning back at him. “I cannot *believe* I am being stalked by my roommate’s brother,” he hisses, shoulders shaking with suppressed laughter as Tubbo wheezes under his breath. “What? You obsessed with me or something?”

“Looking like *that*? How couldn’t I be?”

Their laughter dissolves slowly when Enderpearl makes a little noise of protest at being moved so often, and Tommy sinks as far into the couch as he can with a soft sigh. This is nice. His brain is foggy in the good way, his shoulders unburdened at the moment, and his friends are in his apartment. His *friends*. That’s such a strange thing to think about again.

He’s sinking into the black pool all over again -a place he’s wary of now, but it’s still better than the nightmares- when something pushes at the edges of his consciousness.

“Tommy,” Tubbo calls a second time, and Tommy hums to let him know he’s listening. “Why do you have a final will and testament at eighteen?”

The peace shatters for real this time. Tommy can almost picture the peace physically breaking, exploding into a bunch of jagged little pieces that cut thin lines into his skin. It’s like the window of the meeting room; it’s the reason there’s a hairline scar on his cheekbones. The peace always shatters.

So much for sleeping.

“Tommy?”

He could pretend to be sleeping, but he’s breathing a little too fast and shaking a little too much to make the charade believable. Enderpearl even gets up from his chest to go sleep by her mother- that’s how bad it is. Tubbo sits up a little more to peer at Tommy over his laptop, and when they make eye contact, Tommy clenches his jaw.

How the fuck does he explain this? How do you look someone in the face and explain to them, ‘haha, yeah, I’m going to find some way to kill myself after the Reapers are dealt with?’ How do you explain to someone who you consider your best friend that you’re going to just- how does he-

Oh. Right.

“Just in case the Reapers get me, you know?” He lies, forcing himself to close his eyes and breathe deeply again. “Can’t be too sure they’re not still hunting me.”

“We wouldn’t let them get you.”

That’s a promise, isn’t it? That’s a promise Tubbo can’t keep because he doesn’t really have a say in what Tommy does or doesn’t do. He has no way to predict it- no idea what might happen. And Tommy’s just lied to him. Tubbo made a promise based on a lie.

“You know that, right? We’d protect you from the Reapers.”

That’s great, and Tommy appreciates that. He really does.

But who’s going to protect him from himself?

He sinks back into the couch again, and Tubbo doesn’t try to ask him any other questions. He’s not sure what he’d do if he did, but he doesn’t. Tommy’s brain sinks away into nothingness to the sounds of fingers on a keyboard and the distant sound of Ranboo’s fan. He’d meant to ask Tubbo about that, but it’s a little too late now.

The pool isn’t waiting for him, though. He dreams of being back in that fucking meeting room, of glass shattering as a man came through it, the door locking as more came thundering in. The blinds went down, the cameras were shot out. He can’t- the dream doesn’t have any sound. The men are talking but he can’t understand what they’re saying. He blinks and there’s a gun in his face but no bullet leaving it. There’s blood on his hands.

Those men took everything from him. When he wakes up with a shaking gasp somewhere on his tongue and a hand in his hair, he curls tightly into whoever has decided to hold him and simply tries to breathe. When they call his name, he doesn’t answer.

“Toms?” It’s a whisper, soft and delicate and *so* concerned, and it’s Wilbur. He called Tommy that when he was little- when he was Thomas. Tommy isn’t sure he even means to do it again.

He forces himself to relax, finger unclenching from the sleeves of his own hoodie and letting his shoulder uncurl from where he’d been nearly folded inward. He’s not ready to open his eyes yet, not ready to face the fact that Wilbur is going to be staying with him for a while. His emotions are still all torn up inside when it comes to him.

“He didn’t wake up,” Wilbur says to someone else, and there’s a rustling of fabric as whoever else is here moves.

“He usually doesn’t,” Ranboo answers.

Of course *Ranboo* would be the one to know that. Tommy tries to push away the initial reaction to feeling bitter and instead focuses on calming his racing heart. Ranboo’s had to shake him awake from several nightmares in the month or so they’ve lived together. In the beginning, Tommy thought the nightmares would make it more difficult for them to be friends. Now, though, he knows he shouldn’t underestimate how determined Ranboo is when it comes to him.

They’re best friends. Even in such a short time, they’re best friends. He and Ranboo and Tubbo, inseparable until they can’t avoid it any longer.

“That can’t be normal,” Wilbur mutters, fingers slowly working out the knots that have made home in Tommy’s curls, but this time it’s Tubbo who answers him. Were they all just watching him have a nightmare? That’s so fucking weird.

Tubbo scoffs from wherever it is he’s sitting, and Tommy can hear the sound of a bag being set down. “You literally make a ghost in your sleep, what do you know about normal? Also, he’s fine now. You can leave him be.”

After a particularly reluctant sigh from Wilbur, the fingers in his hair slowly disappear and the arm he’d been lying on is carefully removed, leaving him to curl into the back of the couch once again. The couch is so nice. It’s a deep-seat one, and those are always extra nice for pretending you don’t exist. 10/10, Tommy highly recommends.

“Most of the time, he’ll calm down if I just hold his arm or something. I don’t usually have to wake him up,” Ranboo says after a while, and they all sound like they’re moving into the kitchen. “He’s like a feral cat.”

“Or a raccoon,” Wilbur mumbles, and yeah, okay. Tommy can kind of see it.

He fades out again to the sound of the three brothers talking in the kitchen, and then he jolts awake who even knows how much later when Tubbo slams a book on the coffee table. Tommy jerks upward and stares at Tubbo with wide eyes, and Tubbo stares back innocently. As if there isn't one of Ranboo's stupidly thick textbooks sitting on the table.

"You have to say goodbye to us now," Tubbo explains before Tommy can yell at him, and the distaste for being woken up quickly fades into general displeasure that his friends are leaving.

"You could always take me with you?" Tommy suggests weakly, and Ranboo laughs where he's sitting on the arm of the couch.

"I don't like you'd fit in our suitcases, self-proclaimed 'big man'."

Fair. Tommy can admit that that's fair.

Wilbur flops down on the open cushion of the couch, giving Tommy his most winning smile. "Plus, you get to spend all this time with me! Won't that be fun?"

"No," Tommy deadpans, standing up to stretch and squeaking when Ranboo pulls him into a hug. "It won't be fun because I hate you."

"You wound me, gremlin," Wilbur retorts dramatically, and Tommy resolves to ignore him. It's fine.

He doesn't hate Wilbur; he feels like he has to keep telling himself this a lot. Maybe it's a lie. Maybe it isn't. He likes Wilbur in theory- misses the person he thinks he knew when he was little. But there's still a lot that hasn't been addressed between them. A lot of secrets that they're keeping from each other. Even if Tommy knows what some of Wilbur's secrets are, Wilbur doesn't know he knows that.

When Ranboo and Tubbo leave, and the apartment door shuts behind them, it's just Tommy and Wilbur. This is how it's going to be for the next three weeks. It feels like his friends took a good ninety percent of his will to live when they shut the door behind them.

Wilbur stands beside him in the kitchen, and he clears his throat. "So... what do you want to do now?"

Tommy kind of wants to go back to sleep, or maybe do his homework, or maybe try to remember the nightmare he had earlier. He wants to do a lot of things. Then his stomach rumbles, begging to be fed, and Tommy is trying not to ignore it as often as he used to.

"How do you feel about breakfast?"

When he turns to look at Wilbur, the older man is already watching him with a smile.

"I think that's a great idea."

## Chapter End Notes

discord: [this is the link to my group server with my writer friends pls click it](#)

so. hey new people from the mess that was that poll, ahaha.

...anyway

yall know the drill. ignore any and all spelling errors, join the discord, etc etc. here are some crimeboys sail i hope you enjoy

# Dick GunMan Chose Trick. What An Asshole.

## Chapter Summary

Nevermind. Today is a bad day. Tommy is going to throw himself out of this window and go take a nap.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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So, *technically*, Tommy is meant to be being watched. According to Tubbo, Sam has insisted someone look out for Tommy, and he's using his fancy superhero connections to do so. Tommy's not sure how exactly he's doing that, but pop off, king.

However, the people who have been watching him these last few days aren't aware that he knows their secret identities -Technoblade knows, but he's a bitch so it doesn't matter- and now Wilbur and Phil are trying really hard to keep Tommy in the dark about all of it. Which, again, is kind of funny considering he's the equivalent of standing in direct sunlight.

But it's whatever. Wilbur had to go off and do whatever it is he does as Phantom, Phil is being the fancy Angel guy, and Technoblade is fucking around with Dream in one of the upper districts according to the news. Granted, the news doesn't know they're fucking around. The news thinks this is some life or death battle, but Tommy knows better. He's cool like that.

Plus! He gets to sit inside of a Domino's Pizza -who knew you could go *inside*? Absolutely wild- at four in the morning and shove his face full of cinnamon twists. It's a win-win! Nobody here to watch him *and* fun sugar that won't quite nourish his body? It's not great, but it's better than nothing.

There's a family in here, two moms and- oh my god. Oh my god, is that Sally?? Sally, who is the mother of Wilbur's child, Sally? She has Fundy with her, and another woman with dark

hair dressed in- *oh my god*. That's *the* Ace Race. Wilbur always makes Tommy sit down and watch the dumb Nascar races because of her.

Didn't Wilbur say Sally and Ace were married? And that- hold on. Tommy's brain is too consumed by sugar and sleep deprivation to think straight. Sally and Ace are married. Right. Sally and Wilbur have a child together. Okay, Tommy knows this. Tommy has seen Wilbur kiss Sally on the mouth -disgusting- several times. Does Ace know? Is Sally cheating on Ace with Wilbur? Who would cheat on someone as hot as Ace with *Wilbur*?

You know what? None of Tommy's business. He is going to have a good time eating his cinnamon twists and extra icing, and he is going to ignore the texts coming from Wilbur that insist Tommy text him back, and he is going to have a good time. Cinnamon, Tommy's absolute beloved.

Today is a good day. Today is such a nice day. It's only four in the morning, it's just barely Halloween, there is a man with a gun coming inside the Domino's-

Nevermind. Today is a bad day. Tommy is going to throw himself out of this window and go take a nap.

"I want all your fucking money," Gun Man says, and Tommy's plan to obliterate this window with his body goes out the window -haha- when he hears this guy's voice. You have *got* to be shitting him.

See, he'd be fine with just ignoring what's happening right now if Gun Man was going after the cashier. Cashiers in South Side know that in the event they're being held at gunpoint, it's best to just give the criminal all the money in the register. They'll leave, your boss will check the security camera, and everything will be fine. There's some anonymous donor that always reimburses what was stolen, so no one ever worries about it coming out of their paycheck.

Tommy only knows because he'd worked as a pizza delivery driver -on a moped, it wasn't great- for a short while before going to work for Sam. There was this person, Boomer, who used to work the register while Tommy was driving there. He and his sticky-fingered friend would switch every once in a while about who was delivering and who was working the register, and on one of the nights Tommy was working the counter, they got robbed.



No one had been in the building; Boomer was delivering their last order of the night, and that order was to some guy called Purpled down in Las Nevadas. They were friends from what Tommy remembered, so Boomer wouldn't have been back for a while.

Even though he knew the robber wouldn't have been able to kill him, he still reveled in the cold metal against his temple. For just a moment, he pictured what it would be like.

But he didn't want poor Boomer to be the one to find his body, nor his brains across the walls, so he gave the guy the money from the register, and then he called his boss.

So, to make a long story short, Tommy knows how these interactions work in South Side. But they're currently in East End right now, and in East End-

The cashier dives for the button under the counter that calls for the police like an idiot, and Gun Man panic-fires his gun. Blood sprays the wall behind the counter. The people in the kitchen start to scream. Tommy can see Sally, Ace, and Fundy ducking under the table of the booth they'd been eating at.

He wanted to ignore this *so bad*. He just wanted to eat his fucking cinnamon twists, man. But now the poor girl who couldn't have been any older than he is is probably dead behind the counter and this guy is either going to go for the people in the kitchen or for Sally and her family, and Tommy can't just sit here and let that *happen*. What kind of person would he be if he just let more people die?

"What the fuck, dude?" Tommy calls, dropping his final cinnamon twist -rest easy, beloved- and pushing himself out of his seat, making as much noise as physically possible to make sure Gun Man stops advancing on the kitchen. The adrenaline is pumping fast as he moves opposite the table Sally and her family are hiding under, and he refuses to make eye contact with her when she starts shaking her head at him.

He'd listen to her if he couldn't see Fundy peering out from Ace's arms at him. This isn't South Side. The criminals here aren't stealing and killing to survive; they're doing it because they *can*.

“Oi, dickhead. What the fuck’re you doing?” He almost shouts, and then he’s jumping in place when the guy spins and fires haphazardly. It shatters the window directly behind Tommy, but now this guy can’t fire anymore. He’s got good aim, but he also has the intent to harm Tommy. “What’s your name, you dumb fuck?”

“Why can’t I shoot you?” Gun Man shouts instead of giving his name, so Tommy has decided to call him Richard. It’s short for Dick The Gun Man, after all.

Dick flips his gun around to check the barrel which is honestly pretty stupid in Tommy’s opinion, and he fires at the roof. When it works, he aims back at Tommy again. The gun doesn’t go off.

“Maybe you should try hitting me with your fist, dipshit. You’re clearly too stupid to use a gun!” Oh dear, Sally did *not* like that one. She’s frantically miming cutting her throat, and- and Tommy’s just made eye contact with her. Dick sees where he’s looking. He turns abruptly to stalk toward the table, and Tommy freezes.

This is his problem. When it comes to fight or flight, he freezes. He used to be all about fight when he was younger, and then for a while it was fawning, but now he’s freezing. His brain is connecting the blood on the wall behind the counter to the blood on the remains of the window in that old office building- and Dick is ripping the table out of the floor. Oh. It was screwed down. He must be enhanced somehow.

And then. And then he grabs Sally by the collar of her shirt, and he flings her across the room. Distantly, Tommy watches her slam her head on the metal that divides the windows. He watches how she doesn’t get back up.

This guy... this guy was never going to rob anyone, was he? He came here to kill them.

“*Don’t touch him!*” Ace cries, but she, too, is thrown somewhere else. Discarded as Dick advances on *Fundy*. He’s just a little kid. He’s- he never asked for this. He’s only five.

That's apparently all the motivation Tommy's soggy brain needs to finally shift gears from freeze to fight because when Fundy screams and tries to push himself into the wall, Tommy's legs unlock and he barrels forward as fast as he physically can. He's not strong enough to get the gun out of Dick's hands, he knows that. But he's fast enough to use what little time Dick spends admiring his next victim to slide in front of Fundy and curl around him, effectively blocking him from view.

Blocking him from harm. In order to hurt Fundy, Dick would have to hurt Tommy. He *can't*.

He doesn't turn around to look lest he uncovers even a sliver of the little boy crying into his chest, but he can hear Dick shaking his gun around. He hopes someone in the back pressed the panic button they keep back there, too. He hopes help is going to come because *he can't save them all*. He can't keep Sally and Ace safe if he's using his power to shield Fundy.

"Why can't I fucking *shoot you*?" Dick growls- and he sounds like he's frothing at the mouth. Gross.

Fundy whimpers again, little hands fisted in Tommy's hoodie as he practically vibrates in terror, and Tommy tucks his nose down into fiery hair. It smells like that dumb little kid shampoo they sell with the cartoon animals on it, and it makes tears spring into his eyes. This kid is gonna need so much fucking therapy when this is over.

Tommy should really be getting therapy too, honestly. Fucking hell.

"You're not going to be shooting *anyone*," a voice that sounds suspiciously like Wilbur snarls, and Tommy peers over his shoulder -and oh shit, why is there blood on his sleeve?- to watch Phantom phase the rest of the way through the roof. Translucent, bat-like wings flickering out of existence as he solidifies and delivers a punch directly into the top of Dick's head, phasing *through him* in order to disarm him of his weapon. Now that another helpfully powering individual is present, Dick doesn't stand much of a chance. They trade punches and throw tables, but Phantom is Wilbur, and Wilbur has already come back from the dead once. He'd do it again.

Tommy watches Ace crawl around the edge of the room to get to Sally, and she drags her behind an overturned table and out the side door after sending a Look across the room at

Tommy. The actual message is lost in translation, but Tommy assumes it's something like, "Keep my fucking son safe or so help me." So. Always fun.

Now that Dick's attention isn't directed at hurting Tommy, he actually *can*. And isn't that such a fucked up thing for his power to allow? He doesn't know *why* his power is like this, but it is. If someone is trying to hurt him specifically, they can't. If it's any kind of accident, like being hit by a car or being bonked with the barrel of a gun a little too hard, then apparently it's fine.

It means he has to be extra careful as he pulls Fundy as close to him as he can and keeps his back to the two enhanced individuals fighting in the center of the room. He tucks Fundy's head down and keeps them as low to the ground as he can while still moving quickly, and when he finally manages to push his way out of the glass door, he's met by police officers.

He's met by *Puffy*. He hasn't seen her since they argued a few weeks ago.

"Don't shoot them!" Puffy shouts over the demands for Tommy to raise his hands and drop his weapon -his weapon that is a literal five-year-old, but the police are shit anyway- and she rushes forward to tuck the two of them under her arm. One of the ambulances behind the large number of police cars is already checking Sally's head, so when Puffy leaves him behind the line of police, he heads there.

Fundy is still crying quietly into his shoulder, and Tommy jostles him enough to get his attention. He gives Fundy his best smile as he nods toward the ambulance. "Hey, lil dude," he murmurs, and Fundy just stares back at him with big eyes. "Your mom's over there."

"Fundy!" Sally cries, batting away the paramedic who'd been looking at the side of her head in favor of rushing to take Fundy out of Tommy's arms. She shushes him quietly, pressing little kisses into his hair as she does it. Ace similarly abandons the paramedics to join her wife and son, completing the little hug.

The paramedic who'd been following Ace spots Tommy, and his gaze zeros in on Tommy's arm.

“You’re bleeding, kid,” he states helpfully, and Tommy just nods. He might be in shock, whoopsie. The white sleeve of his hoodie is a lot redder than it’d been when he sat down to eat his cinnamon twists. The paramedic grabs him by the elbow of his uninjured arm and tugs him toward the ambulance, and Tommy lets himself be pulled. There are still the sounds of fighting in the Domino’s. Poor Domino’s.

When the paramedic sits him down on the back of the ambulance and starts to cut away at his sleeve, Tommy just watches Sally and Ace fuss over Fundy. They’ve positioned themselves behind one of the firetrucks to keep Fundy distracted away from any place he could see the fighting. It’s a good idea- Tommy can respect it. Is he in any place to judge? Not really.

“What’s your name?” the paramedic asks as he does *something* with Tommy’s arm. His brain has cut the connection between his arm and his power for the simple purpose of letting this guy *help him*. If it didn’t, whatever the fuck makes his power function would deem this man trying to heal him -and consequently making his arm sting- as a threat, and he wouldn’t be able to. It’s all weird. “Kid?”

Oh. Right.

“Tommy Danger,” he answers quietly.

“That’s quite the last name.”

A smile quirks at one side of his mouth as he thinks about his stupid last name. *Danger*. “Why? Because I was in danger?”

The paramedic chuckles and shakes his head, and he wipes something along Tommy’s arm once he’s done flushing out the wound. “Yeah, because you were in danger. How old are you?”

“Eighteen.”

“Oh, nice. Highschool or college?”

“Mm. I go to school at LMU, but I don’t want to.”

“Ah, my boyfriend goes there. He’s doing pre-med right now.”

Tommy wrinkles his nose in disgust as the paramedic covers the wound in thick gauze and wraps his arm in thick bandages, and then the link between his brain and his arm turns back on again. It’s always weird when that happens. The pain receptors shut off when someone is treating his wounds, but before and after? Those bitches are Active. It feels like his arm is on fire now that the adrenaline has worn off.

“You’ve either got a wicked pain tolerance or you’re in shock,” the paramedic tells him, and he hands him one of those orange shock blankets. It’s a nice offer considering the sleeve of his hoodie is gone and it’s cold as all shit, but he doesn’t think he’s in shock. Probably.

Phantom may have gone into that Domino’s but it’s Wilbur who comes out- even if the mask *is* still on. He shouts some version of ‘clear’ to the police before beelining for Sally, Ace, and Fundy where they huddle not far from the ambulance Tommy is sitting in. They make brief eye contact just as Fundy shouts ‘Papa,’ and Tommy offers a one-shoulder shrug. Cat’s out of the bag now. At least this time Wilbur actually knows his secret identity isn’t a secret anymore.

The paramedics and police alike rush the building, and a few moments later, a few more paramedics jog out of the building to grab the stretcher from one of the other ambulances. Not long after disappearing inside of the building, they wheel the girl from behind the counter out.

She’s alive then. That’s good.

While the vast majority of the medics are busy with the cashier, Tommy drops his blanket on the back of the ambulance and steps off onto the road. He spares one more look at where Wilbur wraps his stupidly long arms around his family before he walks around the side of the ambulance and down an alley, disappearing under the sound of the sirens and shouting. The

police will transport that guy to Pandora's Vault, most likely. That's where all the enhanced bad guys go.

The further he gets from the Scene Of The Crime, the quieter it becomes. It's nice. The news will air this story in a couple of hours, and then by tonight, everyone will forget about it. By tonight, kids will be walking door to door to trick-or-treat. The heroes and villains and everyone in between will be able to walk the streets in full regalia, and they'll do their best to keep the peace. Something bad will inevitably happen, but that's okay. That's simply the way it is.

This morning, Dick The Gun Man chose trick, it seems. What an asshole.

Tomorrow marks November, and November marks a month left before his semester ends and he goes on Christmas break. In three weeks from tomorrow, Tubbo and Ranboo will be back. It'll be nice.

He waves down one of the taxis he passes, and he leans back in his seat as the lady drives him home- back to the apartment. The heat inside of the vehicle is nice even if the weird leather seats aren't. Tommy can practically hear his bed calling him, and when he finally gets dropped off and makes it up the stairs, he doesn't hesitate to head for his room.

After a short funeral for his ruined hoodie before it's dumped on the floor by the door to be disposed of later, Tommy tugs a new hoodie over his head and then falls forward onto his bed, perfectly content to sleep in his jeans. Who's going to tell him no? Ranboo isn't here to yell at him for being uncultured.

His consciousness is slipping from him slowly, cheeks cushioned in the soft blankets that he tugs up to cover most of his face from the chill, and then something thuds onto the floor. He forcefully peels his eyes open in time to catch the overhead light turning on, and Tommy groans as he tugs the blankets over his head. Whoever has broken in could at least be kind enough to not turn the lights on.

"Tommy!" His intruder practically reprimands, and the covers are forcefully pulled away from him. He squints at Wilbur's maskless face with a little pout, and Wilbur's entire demeanor visibly softens. He's still all beat up from fighting Dick GunMan. "Why did you just *leave*?"

“Tired,” Tommy mumbles back, grabbing for the blankets again and only throwing a small fit when Wilbur tugs them even further away. He has earned some sleep, thank you. He actually *likes* sleeping right now.

“I saw you in the back of that ambulance, man. What happened to you? Did he hit you somewhere?”

“Who? Dick GunMan?”

“Di- *Tommy.*”

Tommy sits up with another groan and wiggles his arm out of his sleeve, showing the bandages to Wilbur. “He grazed me, I guess. I don’t think he meant to.”

“He’s a bad man, Tommy. He probably meant to do worse.”

I mean, the only reason he hit Tommy at all was because he wasn’t actually aiming at Tommy in particular, but pop off.

Wilbur goes to sit on the bed to examine his arm and Tommy flaps his hands at him, petulant frown in place. “No, fuck you, you’re dirty. Go home or something.”

“I’m not going to fucking leave you here by yourself, stupid. If Ranboo or Tubbo were here then *maybe* I’d go, but I’m not going to just let you process this on your own.”

Tommy mimics him, but Wilbur’s let go of the blankets and isn’t trying to sit on the bed in his dirty hero clothes anymore, so Tommy counts that as a win. He grabs for the blankets again and curls up on his side with a little sigh, squinting at Wilbur once more.



“You can talk to me when you’ve showered,” he grumbles, and then for good measure, adds “bitch.”

Wilbur just gives him a Look -he’s getting a lot of those tonight- before he turns on his heel, flips the light off, and leaves Tommy’s room. He leaves the door open which sucks, but there isn’t a lot of light in the apartment and Tommy doesn’t have to worry about the cats waking him up early, so things are good.

He does miss the girls. Ranboo took them with him because they’re ‘his babies’ or whatever, but they’re Tommy’s girls. What happens if they miss him and he’s not there to give them kisses?

No matter. Wilbur is somewhere else in the apartment and not bothering Tommy, so it’s bedtime. Delicious sleep, here he comes. He tries not to think too hard about what happened and instead falls back on that familiar darkness that haunts his eyes, sinking into the mattress with another sigh as he noses at the pillow. When he falls asleep, all he can hear is the sound of the shower across the hall from him turning on.

He wakes up with a start when his bedroom door shuts quietly, but he doesn’t wake up enough to really acknowledge it. His body decides there’s no danger in the room and he’s back to sinking within seconds, barely humming when the bed dips on the other side. Stupid Wilbur. Using his shampoo and then staying in his room with him. Ranboo has a perfectly good room he could sleep in.

Tommy still lifts his head enough for Wilbur to slide his arm under it, though. He still lets himself be held. It reminds him of- it reminds him of his mom in a way. Resting his head on a shoulder, but this time, the other arm curls over him. This time, the body he’s lying against can hold him back.

Sleep fades as utter despair takes its place, and Tommy reaches around Wilbur’s side to grab at the back of his sweatshirt with a choked gasp. Wilbur just shushes him quietly, arms tight where they wrap around his back.

“I’ve got you,” Wilbur whispers, reassuring and upsetting in the same breath. This is *Wilbur*. This is one part of his past personified, but it’s also just Wilbur. He’s not some teenager anymore. “I’m not going anywhere.”

Wilbur is holding him *back*. This is the first Sunday he's ever been held in return.

## Chapter End Notes

i dont know anything about injuries the

if you see spelling errors no you dont

# A Motorcycle Named Carl

## Chapter Summary

“You shouldn’t be out in the cold if you’re sick, Toms. Do you like Tommy, now? Or Thomas?”

Tommy is going to vomit all over his shoes again, thank you.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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Wilbur has decided that the best way to take care of Tommy is to quite literally follow him everywhere. Tommy asks, “Don’t you have work?” and Wilbur dismisses his concerns. Wilbur picks him up from class. Phantom picks him up from work.

“I wish someone had been there for me when I was struggling,” Wilbur had said on the third day when Tommy had decided asking him over and over again was the only way to get an answer. It’d taken all of the strength and dignity Tommy had not to take one of the kitchen knives and stab directly through Wilbur’s throat.

“You remind me of someone I used to know.” Had been the answer a different time. Tommy had contemplated how easily he could shove his stupid paper straw into Wilbur’s eye. Wilbur could die in a hole for all Tommy cared. He may end up in a hole at this rate.

And then. And then there’s the whole ‘Wilbur sleeping in his bed’ thing. Don’t get Tommy wrong- he doesn’t exactly *mind* it. Tubbo’s not the biggest fan of physical contact, but Ranboo lets Tommy lay all over him when he’s home. They’re both stupidly touch-oriented. Tubbo claims he isn’t, but he doesn’t stop them when they try to hug him. Maybe that’s just him listening to their love language. Who knows. Tommy certainly doesn’t.

But part of being in such close proximity to Wilbur over the last week means he knows the guy has nightmares. They’re usually pretty tame, noticeable only with the furrow of his brows and the softest whispers. Maybe he’ll fling his arm out so it rests over Tommy’s back,

and then he settles. Tommy just lets him work his way through it. He has his own nightmares, but unlike Wilbur, he's a big man who refuses to sleep just so he won't have them.

He doesn't know if Wilbur has them every night or not. Tommy definitely doesn't have his every night, but he had a not-so-great one the night before. He's sitting up on 'his side' of the bed, hunched over his phone and tapping away at the word search game he downloaded for nights specifically like these. He's not even tired, honestly. More so just missing the sound of Ranboo's stupid fan in his room but too much of a coward to admit that and go turn it on. Wilbur's dumb snoring isn't a good substitute, but at least it's something.

And then Wilbur is snapping upward to sit beside him, chest spasming as he stares blankly forward. Tommy watches him with wide eyes, grinding his teeth when the tears that leak silently down Wilbur's cheeks seem almost tinted black in the light from his phone screen. He doesn't move much aside from removing one hand from his phone to touch Wilbur's arm, and then he's shrieking quietly in surprise when Wilbur turns sharply to grab him.

It doesn't- it doesn't hurt. Wilbur doesn't grab his arms hard. In fact, Wilbur's left hand barely ghosts over the bandages on Tommy's right arm. His hands jump and spasm as they move from Tommy's arms to cradle his face, and in the low light from his phone, Tommy can see that Wilbur isn't really seeing him. He's still sleeping, somehow. He's locked inside of his own head.

"You were so little," Wilbur whispers, and Tommy's entire body locks up. Those words had an echo to them that they shouldn't- ethereal and wrong all at once. Wilbur tugs him in suddenly, tucking Tommy under his chin so tightly that he can feel the way Wilbur's chest jumps with each shaking breath.

"Just a baby." Wilbur's rocking them from side to side, petting Tommy's hair with one hand while he grips the back of his shirt with the other. "My baby brother. My Toms. I'm so sorry."

Like this, he can hear the frantic beat of Wilbur's heart. Before his phone screen decides to turn itself off, Tommy can see the tears that slip over Wilbur's chin and down the column of his throat. They appear grayish even at a new angle with new lighting.

"Wilbur," Tommy finally calls, trying to either wake him up or shift the course of whatever weird dream he's having, but Wilbur doesn't react. He just keeps rocking them side to side,

cooing quietly to the darkness around them as he pets the back of Tommy's head. "Wilbur-"

"I'm so sorry. I'm so- so sorry, Toms. My Toms."

With the weird echo, quiet enough that he wouldn't hear it were there any other noise, Tommy hates to think about what Wilbur sounds like. It sends fear curling down his spine.

As a last-ditch effort, Tommy swallows his pride and forces himself to relax. His shoulders drop from where they'd been pinched around his ears and he leans more of his weight against Wilbur with a deep breath. "Wilby?" He tries, and the nickname tastes weird on his tongue now that he's eighteen and not *eight*, but Wilbur freezes. That's progress.

"I'm tired, Wilby," he says, makes his voice soft and childlike as he tries to shift his weight more toward the pillows. "Can we lay down?"

Prime rest your soul, dignity, for you will be missed.

"Of course we can," Wilbur mutters, and his grip on the back of Tommy's shirt loosens considerably. He leans them down until they're resting on their sides, Tommy tucked awkwardly under Wilbur's chin with his legs folded impractically, but at least Wilbur isn't muttering in what might as well be tongues. Weirdo.

Wilbur relaxes quickly, whatever state of sleep he'd been in previously leaving him limp and practically smothering Tommy. But where Wilbur's quiet, sniffling sobs taper off into muted snoring, something outside begins to wail.

No one ever really talks about it, but the city knows what it is. The people who live here know exactly what makes that sound. You're not supposed to chase after it lest you find your demise like the folk tales say, but someone has to. Someone has to follow the sound that creature makes because it always solves some kind of case that would otherwise be left to gather dust.

This doesn't make the wailing any less terrifying. Every hair on Tommy's body stands on end as he listens to the crying that echoes from somewhere in the city.

He's connecting dots. He sits up slowly, Wilbur's arms falling away easily when Tommy picks them up by the wrist and dumps them in the general vicinity of Wilbur's person. He reaches for the place he remembers his phone being, flicking the screen on and sliding the brightness up all the way to shine it on Wilbur's face. The man sleeps like the dead -ha- so a little light in his face won't wake him up.

Wilbur's tears are tinted black. He doesn't wear any kind of eye makeup that would change the color of his tears.

Tubbo said Wilbur 'makes a ghost' when he sleeps, and the Ghost cries tears inky black like the void. They turn to a weird sludge-like goop when they touch anything that isn't its skin. Tommy's walked past enough crime scenes for recently reopened cases to see that shit all over the sidewalk. It's disgusting.

There must've been a consequence when Wilbur cheated death. Tommy can still see the phantom loop of the noose around his neck, and when he traces it, the wailing outside grows louder. More desperate.

In South Side, they used to say that if you could hear the Ghost crying, you were already as good as dead.

Nobody in South Side ever called the police about the Ghost anymore. An old man had the first time the Ghost had ever appeared, and then he'd been shot over the decades-old body the police uncovered in the place the Ghost had been. They hadn't believed him when he said there had been something gray and grotesque and wailing. Nobody believed the people in South Side.

Tommy had almost called the police about it once, but the lady in the building across from his old one had quite literally smacked his phone out of his hand with her sandal and told him -in no uncertain terms- that the police couldn't be trusted. They'd just have to wait until the beat cops who tried to arrest the homeless eventually drove through and heard it for themselves.

This isn't South Side, though. This is smack in the middle of East and West End, slightly more West than Central but not quite. People out here don't handle things the way those in South Side do, Tommy is learning. The people around here can trust the police because they're usually well-off, white, and not noticeably enhanced.

Tommy is privileged enough to be all three of those things.

It's why he gets out of bed and reactivates his White Person In A Horror Movie Mode. He slinks his way out onto the fire escape like an absolute badass, puts on his Escape Sneakers - shoes he's started keeping on the fire escape because Wilbur is weirdly sensitive to the sound of the door opening but not the window- and then he makes his way down to the street.

He tries to ignore the terror that crawls sluggishly through his veins with each anguished wail from what he now knows to quite literally be Wilbur's ghost. He's- it's-

He remembers it. a little bit. The Ghost. There'd been a long, *long* time when he was little that he'd had an imaginary friend. The therapists and the doctors and everyone else used to say that it was just Tommy coping with the loss. He couldn't remember losing anybody, but Ghostbur was a nice imaginary friend to have even if he was a little scary. Ghostbur was kind and he only remembered good things because Tommy only remembered good things.

There's... there's a painting of Ghostbur hanging in his mother's art gallery. He hasn't visited in a long time. He feels like he should.

He wanders directly through the middle of the street as he follows the little bits and pieces of black ooze that dot the road. The Ghost's wailing echoes off buildings until it's nearly reverberating through the sky itself, and when the tiniest of flurries begin to dance on the wind, Tommy feels like it's fitting.

The snow won't stick; the ground is still too warm for that. But it makes the mournful cries of a spirit caught between worlds even more eerie as they bounce off of buildings and curl around dark corners. The Ghost wants someone to find it.

Tommy... Tommy wants to find Ghostbur. If the Ghost is even still his childhood friend.

The shitty thing about Tommy's memories is he only gets to remember them sometimes. Even memories he's made in the last year slip easily through his fingers- no different than bathwater or shredded slips of paper. He never even realizes they're gone until he tries to recall them and finds he can't. Someone asks him a question about March and he finds he can't remember a second of it.

Time slips uselessly from him. The grasp he had on it in his childhood was something he always cherished, but now it's as though he never had it to begin with. Time is no longer his friend. He'd lost time standing over his father's coffin; staring down at his stagnant chest one moment and then sitting in his seat with the cross his father had held the next.

It used to happen a lot after Wilbur died. His brain could never quite decide what memories were worth keeping and which weren't, and now that his parents have died, he's here again.

All is lost.

The crying gets louder as Tommy steps down a sidestreet. This is the street where -during the second week of June where LMU hosts L'Manburg's pride festival- the food trucks line up to sell the entire city greasy foods and alcoholic drinks. Tommy had no intention to attend, but one moment he blinked, and the next he'd been standing in the middle of this street. It'd been lively out here. Several drag queens had taken Tommy into their little dressing room and given him water under the impression he was suffering from a heatstroke.

Now, within the first week of November at ass o'clock in the morning, the streets are empty. Most everyone makes themselves scarce in the early hours of the morning if they're able. They know the Ghost might be out, and as eager as everyone is to solve cold cases, they're not eager to see the specter that will lead them to it. Tommy only wants to see him to really prove that the Ghost is who he thinks it is. He'd dreamed vaguely of it on the day he was 'missing,' but he hasn't seen or heard of it since. Until now, of course.

Tommy ducks under an overpass that the trains run over, and both he and the wailing stop. In the light of the street lamps and the polluted stars, he sees it.



“Ghostbur?”

“Hi, Toms.”

It's terrifying to realize this ghost is exactly the way Tommy remembers it. The same gray, colorless skin that fades to an unsettling cobalt blue as its arms descend into hands and fingers from within the sleeves of a stained yellow sweater. Its hair, fluffy and floating as bits of it appear to break off and flicker out of existence, is an even darker gray. Its eyes are still blacker than the very void, set into a face that looks some cross between happy and exhausted, resting on a neck bent too far to not be broken.

Tommy- remembers. *Prime*, does he remember. He'd tried to use all his weight to get Wilbur down and there'd been that- that *crack* and-

He stops his forward stumble to double over and vomit his dinner into the gutter. Wilbur'd already been dead from asphyxiation by then. Tommy didn't kill him. It's not his fault.

“You're sick?” Ghostbur asks, toppled head somehow tilting further as it floats over to him. Its voice still echoes with the remnants of horrid wailing, but it's not crying too loudly anymore. Just silent, inky tears that dribble from the edges of its chin. “You shouldn't be out in the cold if you're sick, Toms. Do you like Tommy, now? Or Thomas?”

Tommy is going to vomit all over his shoes *again*, thank you.

“No- no. Tommy's good. Tommy's great, Ghostbur.” And then he stops, righting himself slowly with the help of the slanted concrete to his right and staring into the empty eyes of this ghost. It looks *exactly* fucking like Wilbur. How hadn't he- how hadn't he *known*? I mean, okay, *technically* his brain very forcefully cut off all memories of Wilbur, but still. You think he'd remember at least a little bit.

You'd think his brain would have saved him the trouble of having to piece together memories now by giving them to him when he was still young and squishy, but nooOOOoo. Stupid brain, you're getting a shit review on yelp.

“Look at you,” Ghostbur coos, cupping Tommy’s face in its hands and smiling down at him like he’s the only thing in the world. There’s cobalt blue transferring to his face; this much he knows. “You’ve gotten so big, Tommy. How have you been? What’s been happening while we’ve been apart?”

The echoing *really* makes Tommy want to turn tail and book it back down the road, but he won’t be doing that. He is so gracious and respectful and not scared of anything. He’s the biggest man ever.

Ghostbur is creepy as *fuck*, though. Like, you know in those movies when the little kid is friends with the creepy demon who lives in their attic or something? That’s how Tommy feels about his eight-year-old self right now. His poor parents; they would’ve had to listen to him prattle on about his ‘best friend Ghostbur’ immediately after his ‘big brother Wilbur’ bit the dust on purpose. What a freak thing to do, Little Tommy. How nasty of you.

“Tommy?”

Haha. Right. Tommy is so in the present right now. He is not floating away at all.

“I mean,” Tommy eventually manages to choke out, “what’s the last thing you remember happening?”

“I remember everything, silly. Well. I remember everything Wilbur remembers. He just doesn’t get to remember what I remember because he doesn’t want to.”

Tommy sinks slowly to sit on the sidewalk beneath him, hiding a wince when Ghostbur does the same. When the ghost reaches for one of his hands, Tommy lets it take it.

“You’re probably in a little bit of shock right now,” Ghostbur says, and its laugh is grating and choked like it’s still suffocating. It’s terrifying. “It’s okay. I’ll wait for you to feel better.”

There is a song playing in Tommy's head right now. It's that one with the- with the 'hello darkness my old friend,' but he's replaced darkness with trauma. He's so funny. Why isn't anybody laughing?

"You..." he starts, but he has to rearrange the words when they get caught inside his throat. "How do you remember everything? You're only... aren't you only supposed to remember good things?"

"Oh, Tommy," the ghost murmurs, gentle and sweet and so, *so* spooky. "You're my good thing. Of course, I'd remember you."

"Even the bad stuff?"

"Nothing is ever bad if you're there."

Tommy... Tommy wants to ask Ghostbur about dying. He wants to ask this ghost of what was once his brother what it felt like to die. He wants to know if Ghostbur still knows what that felt like.

Instead, a pair of heavy boots thunk down onto the asphalt near them from the bridge above. Instead, there's the distinct sound of large wings cushioning a landing not far from where the boots had landed.

When he looks up, he's met with the Blade and the Angel. Neither one of them are very good at pretending they don't feel a certain way about him being here.

"You're the kid from Neutral Grounds," the Angel says, and Tommy is reminded that Phil still thinks Tommy's an idiot who doesn't know his identity. It really isn't that hard to put it together- not when four out of five of their identities have been revealed. Tommy might be an idiot, but he's not stupid.

“And you’re the bird guy who hasn’t solved my parent’s murder yet,” he snaps back, and whoopsie on his part for that one. “What do you want?”

Technoblade glances around the area this time before speaking, and then he turns back to Tommy in such a way that almost makes the boar skull mask look disappointing. The joke’s on Technoblade, though, for Tommy is suddenly extremely exhausted and very, *very* cold.

“You don’t have a coat,” Ghostbur states. It starts flapping its hands around -something Tommy remembers rather fondly from his childhood- and it turns to Technoblade. “Techno, give him your cloak. He’s cold.”

“Ghostbur-”

“I am invoking the older brother card.”

“You’re a *ghost*-”

“Dad, Technoblade is bullying me again-”

Phil doesn’t even seem surprised that he’s just been outed, and when he turns to Tommy, all the younger blond can do is offer a shrug. Who’s he going to tell?

Tommy likes listening to them argue- even if Ghostbur’s voice is all. weird. It’s twisted and gravely while somehow maintaining a lightness to it that does nothing to ease the terror that crawls consistently down Tommy’s spine. He’s not sure how he looked at this thing when he was younger and thought, “yes, this is a great idea and not creepy at all.” Kids are wild.

Technoblade heaves an overdramatic sigh and undoes the clasps of his cloak, shuffling over to drop the red length of cloth and white fur over Tommy’s shoulders. This turns out to be a mistake, however, as Tommy absolutely despises the feeling of artificial fur. He quite literally throws himself into the street to get away from it, and by that point, his shoulders are up to cover the back of his neck.

There's silence behind him, and then Techno mutters, "You could've just said no."

"Bad texture," Tommy responds quietly, and he sits up once his shoulders unlock to dust himself off. He'd scraped his elbow, how unfortunate.

"Oh, that's right! You don't like the fake stuff." Leave it to Ghostbur to remember that. Tommy never remembers until he's touched it, and by that point, it's too late.

Ranboo and Tubbo always make fun of him when they go to the store and Tommy just touches all the blankets. Without fail. Every *single* time. And the blankets, without fail, make him cringe so hard his bones pop. "You do this every time," they say. Well, fuck them. Maybe this time it'll be different.

"How do you know that?" Technoblade asks, once more lifting his cloak, and Ghostbur floats back to standing again.

"I knew Tommy when he was little, of course. He's my baby brother."

Uh oh. Tommy's also just been exposed. Ghostbur really does not understand the concept of secrets.

Technoblade looks at Tommy, and then at Ghostbur before he tips his head back to look up at the sky. Tommy just continues sitting in the middle of the road and- oh. It's snowing again.

"Blade," Phil drawls, going for whatever remains of their professionalism and missing it completely. "You take Tommy home. I'll go with Ghostbur to mark whatever bodies he's found."

"You're going to what?" Tommy hears himself ask, but he's more focused on how, when Technoblade pulls him up, he's practically radiating heat. Tommy will claim he doesn't

remember this if Technoblade ever brings it up, but for now, he lets himself collapse against the man. Technoblade freezes, but he doesn't make a move to push Tommy away.

At least- not while Phil's watching.

"One of us always tries to find Ghostbur when he comes out. If we get to him quick enough, he'll lead us to a couple different places. We solve a lot of cold cases that way." Phil explains, and Technoblade places a heavy hand on Tommy's shoulder to start guiding him away. Tommy's practically tucked under his arm at this rate, nearly shielded entirely from the world by his cloak. It's a nice texture when it's not the horrid fake fur.

"That makes sense, I guess," he mutters, and then with a quiet wave Ghostbur's direction, Technoblade starts to lead them up the ramp to the overpass. When they get up there, Technoblade fishes keys out of his pocket -where the fuck was he keeping that pocket- and unlocks *something* with the press of a button.

That something is a motorcycle. Like- a really fucking cool motorcycle. Maybe the Blade isn't as lame as Tommy likes to pretend he is. Even if he still questions the guy's morals.

Techno abandons Tommy to root around in some hidden compartment under his seat, and he throws a leather jacket at Tommy as he searches for something else. The jacket is *much* too big, but Tommy is cold, so he'll take what he can get.

"Why didn't I hear your bike pulling up?" Tommy asks suddenly, pulling the stupidly large jacket tighter around himself and leaning against the guard rail at the edge of the bridge. He tries to throw himself over the edge when Techno isn't looking -just for fun- but his back locks up and his body doesn't follow the urge to throw his weight. How rude.

"The Warden fixed it up for me so it's basically silent. Helps me get around the city a lot faster, and it doesn't give away my position."

Neat.

“You ever hit anybody with it?”

“Phil still down there?”

Tommy glances over the edge this time, but all that remains on the road below the bridge is a little blinking red light.

“No.”

“Then yeah. These guys were trying to shove a teenager into the back of their van so I just. Conveniently forgot where the brake was.”

You know, even if Tommy doesn't trust Technoblade *at all*, at least the guy isn't too bad. Tommy just. kind of wishes he'd be better about patrolling South Side. The criminals down there aren't like the other parts of the city, but the Blade treats them the same. It's not... it's all twisted and wrong.

“Was it bloody?”

“Absolutely.” Techno's cloak *sparkles* before literally shifting to wrap around his arms and torso. When he catches Tommy staring, utterly gobsmacked, he has the audacity to grin. “Magic.” Is his only explanation, and Tommy wants to strangle him.

There's tension, though. The air between them is rigid.

“So you're that kid, then?” Technoblade finally asks, leaning back against his bike and crossing his arms. “The one Phil and Wilbur have been killing themselves trying to find.”

“Yeah,” Tommy answers with a small shrug of his left shoulder. After throwing himself out of the cloak earlier, his right arm is aching again. Stupid gunshot wound.

“What’s the story behind that? Why’re they so desperate to find you? And why haven’t you said anything to either of them?”

Tommy glances at Techno, and then down at his crossed arms, and then back at Techno.

“Do you... do you really not know? Have they not told you anything?”

Techno shakes his head, and it’s only then that Tommy notices they’re mirroring each other. “Wil gets all cagey if anyone mentions you, and Phil doesn’t bring anything up if it’ll upset Wilbur.”

“That can’t be healthy,” Tommy mutters, and Technoblade scoffs.

“You’re telling me.” There’s a pause, and then Techno jerks his chin in Tommy’s direction. “Spill. We’re not moving until you tell me what’s up with that.”

Tommy inhales sharply and kicks at the loose pieces of rock on the road below him. This is stupid.

This is necessary.

“I knew Wilbur and Phil when I was little.” Tommy starts, and he watches the breath fog out of his mouth with a small disconnect. “For about a year, Phil and Kristin and Wilbur would come around all the time. My parents were talking to them about business, I think, and Wilbur had to watch me. We were like brothers.”

Techno watches him quietly, and Tommy bites at the inside of his cheek. He can’t do it hard enough to make it bleed, but sometimes that’s all you can do.



“And then Wilbur killed himself,” Technoblade mutters, and Tommy nods.

“And then Wilbur killed himself.”

They’re quiet for a long, long time before Techno speaks again. “I hated Wilbur when I first met him,” he admits. “All he did was talk about you. And I wasn’t really jealous of you, but Wilbur and that ghost were obsessed with you. It was his fault he couldn’t see you anyway.”

Tommy doesn’t say anything. From the sound of it, Technoblade has never had someone to talk to about this stuff.

“I know Phil only adopted me to keep Wilbur company. He wasn’t- it wasn’t even really an adoption. I was just some child assassin that he hired to do the exact *opposite* of killing someone.” Oh. Tommy did not know this. It appears we’re trauma dumping at ass o’clock in the morning.

Tommy has school in a few hours. He probably won’t go, but it’s worth noting while he sits here and shivers.

“He ended up adopting me for real about a year later, but still. Being paid to pretend to be his son and Wilbur’s brother was awful when all they did was talk about you. I was basically bought to replace you.”

“And now I’m replacing me,” Tommy mutters, and Techno snorts a laugh.

“Yeah. You are, aren’t you?” In the distance, Tommy can see a large pair of wings cut in front of the moon.

“Did Wilbur ever start treating you like *you*?”

“He did. Phil did it first, though. It took Kristin literally threatening his life before he took a far enough step back to realize that I was a person outside of also being an assassin.”

Technoblade really doesn't fit into that mold Tommy put him into, but a tragic backstory doesn't really work as a magical excuse. No amount of childhood trauma is going to excuse the fact that Techno's perception of people is skewed, but at least Tommy has some kind of explanation now.

“What's it like being an assassin?”

Techno stares at him for a second, and then he shakes his head. “That's enough of that. Come on, kid. I'm taking you home before you freeze to death. Don't you have school?”

“Sure do.”

“Phil's gonna kill me.”

Tommy snickers to himself, and he climbs onto the motorcycle behind Techno. He should really be wearing a helmet, but there's a good chance Techno isn't going to kill them on their way back to the apartment. It's... it's nice to have the wind in his face. He's always loved the feeling of the breeze, and even if Techno is driving way too fast for a breeze, this is still nice.

When he gets home, he locks the door behind him and stops in the living room between his room and Ranboo's. He could go back into his room where Wilbur is and be held, or he can go turn the fan on in Ranboo's room and sleep in there.

He thinks of the Ghost, and he shuts the door to Ranboo's room behind him. The sound of his dumb box fan turning on manages to swallow the other thoughts in Tommy's head with white noise, and he curls atop the comforter with several of the blankets from the basket meant for the girls. It's nice in here.

Tommy makes sure his alarm isn't on for school before he lets himself sleep.

He doesn't have nightmares this time.

## Chapter End Notes

yall ive got a meeting wiht my advisor in like. six hours. and then i have a bunch of assignments due in eight. and i haven't slept yet. but im watching my friends stream the sims and im beep boppin my way through life. if this doesn't make sens to the story its bc i cannot form a single thought

if you see spelling errors no you don't <3

# Everything Changed When The Fire Nation Attacked

## Chapter Summary

"Boomer! Atrium's on fire!"

"Complaining about my sister doesn't mean I want her *dead!*"

## Chapter Notes

there are end notes. read them.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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Boomer of all people is in the cafe today, but he's not here to see Tommy. He's... he's here to see Sam, and he keeps calling him dad, and how many fucking kids does this man have??

"Hannah put a hole in my hat," Boomer complains, slumped over the front counter as he pets a delicate hand over the frog hat he never seems to take off. "Why is she your favorite kid?"

"Tommy's my favorite kid," Sam answers without hesitating, and then he freezes. Tommy pretends he wasn't eavesdropping from within the kitchen, going so far as to throw a balled-up cloth into the empty sink so the bang sounds like it came from the other side of the room. He's so sneaky. Definitely not unsettled by Sam referring to him as his kid, oh no. He is so strong and independent and- oh shit it's snowing.

The snow is gray.

That is not snow.

He flings the door to the kitchen open while Boomer laughs wholeheartedly at a red-faced Sam, ducking behind the taller man and pushing the glass door open. He ignores Sam's calls for him and instead steps out into the street, jaw-dropping as he stares at the giant cloud of ash floating over the city. Something is. very wrong.

"Tommy, I didn't-" Sam stops short, though, and Tommy can feel the hand that'd fallen onto his shoulder tighten. Sam's other hand comes up to his other shoulder, and he starts to pull him back inside. "Inside. Get inside *right now*."

"Sam-"

"Boomer!" Sam calls, and Boomer stands from where he'd been sitting as nonchalantly as he could. "Atrium's on fire!"

"Complaining about my sister doesn't mean I want her *dead*," Boomer groans. He's out of the door before Tommy can even blink, and Sam deposits him into Boomer's chair with a quick ruffle of his hair.

"Stay put," he warns, and then he, too, is ducking out of the door with ease. He then proceeds to lock Tommy inside. Like a bitch.

Well. Tommy could leave, technically. He could also do his homework. He should probably do his homework. Finals week is the first week of December, and he's kind of been slacking recently with the whole Mentally Unstable Orphan thing, but at least he's *trying*, you know? And even if he ends up losing his scholarship and flunking out of LMU, he and Tubbo have set up seven students with full-ride scholarships for the spring semester. He's doing good work.

Just. Not the best schoolwork. It's fine, though.

He's not even struggling with the actual coursework. It's the simple fact that they are *rapidly* approaching the holidays, and this will be the first year Tommy ever has to spend without his parents. They didn't even live to see him turn eighteen, and now he has to spend holidays

without them? His dad loved Halloween, and Tommy slept through that. He'd been shot, to be fair, but still.

Calc, right. Tommy is doing his maths homework. He is- listening to glass shatter?? What the fuck??

He turns to face the now shattered front door, snarky remark on his tongue, but it dies the second he's face-to-mask with the distorted ram from the empty warehouse. The stupid cafe is empty because Sam ran off and it's 2 pm on a Wednesday so no one is on their lunch break and Tommy is going to lose his fucking mind he's-

"There you are, you little rat," Mask Man croons. He's gentle with the way he says it, speaking as though Tommy were a frightened child in need of placating. Maybe he *is* a frightened child. Panic is already rising in his chest, circling his lungs in a vice grip and leaving him to scramble backward. He doesn't get very far with the counter behind him, and he can't turn and run. People both masked and not are filing in on all sides. Every exit is blocked.

Mask Man crowds into his space, dragging the backs of his gloved fingers down Tommy's cheek and under his chin with a soft shushing sound. He cradles his face with one hand, patting gently at the scar under his left eye.

"Look at *you*, little Thomas," he coos quietly, "you already got Mommy and Daddy killed, and now you're trying to do the same to these good people?"

He didn't- it wasn't-

"We wouldn't have had to set Miss. Hannah's atrium on fire if you'd just been a good little boy and stopped *hiding* behind these people." Mask Man can't squeeze his face too hard, but he does it enough to cause the smallest amount of discomfort. To make Tommy feel even more trapped. "Now she's going to *die*, and it's going to be *your fault*."

Mask Man drops his face just as something pinches the side of his neck, and Tommy scrambles away in enough time to see an empty syringe flash under the soft lighting of the

cafe. Fuck his stupid powers for stopping people from hurting him but drawing the line at them literally shooting him up with some kind of drug or some shit. Who do his powers think they are? Motherfuckers.

“I didn’t *do* anything,” he slurs, and Mask Man just shakes his head.

“We must wipe away all stains that stand between Our Lady and Salvation, Thomas.” He’s dropped the pleasantries- sweet voice gone in favor of a distorted kind of snarl. “Your parents neglected to tell our insiders about your... *enhancements*, but we are taking measures to work around those.”

It’s as Tommy’s consciousness fades, terror climbing up the inside of his lungs to choke him in the base of his throat, that Mask Man grabs his face again. “Your mother may have guarded your secret with her life, but she’s not here to protect you anymore.”

They can’t even kill him. They *can’t*.

Can they?

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So. Turns out they can kill him.

He didn’t think they would be able to, but Tommy supposes his powers don’t work while he’s unconscious. Why would they, really? There’s not supposed to be anything to protect himself from in his sleep, so they have no reason to be active during that.

This isn’t even something he considers until he’s thrown roughly back into consciousness with a shock through his shoulder. He can feel the way his flesh absorbs the bullet, and he cries out at the horrid, stinging pain of it all. There was no adrenaline to keep his body from noticing it. All of his focus is on this foreign pain in his body, and he heaves a sob that makes his body burn even more.

“See, little Thomas,” Mask Man mutters, a quiet kind of elation in his voice as he hands off the gun to one of his weird little goons. “I told you you’d die just like your parents did. It took a lot of observation, but we *finally* figured out we can’t hurt you while you’re awake. No one ever said you had powers, so it took a bit longer than it should have.”

He crouches down to be near Tommy’s face, and he swabs a bit of blood onto his white glove with another happy sound. “Your parents got to die quickly because they behaved, but you’ve gotten too close to Our Lady and her family. You deserve to suffer for risking her purpose, Thomas. There have to be consequences for your transgressions.”

Tommy didn’t even *do* anything.

“Fuck you,” he spits instead, and Mask Man laughs that same, dark laugh. In any other situation, it wouldn’t be so bad. Considering it’s coming from the body that just put a fucking bullet through him, though, means that laugh is the actual worst.

“Say hi to your mommy and daddy for me, won’t you?” Mask Man teases like a cliché little bitch, and then he and his dumb posse take their leave.

Tommy can- listen, okay. Listen. He can be as tough as he wants, but there are still tears running down his face. He’s still wheezing around sobs and choking on mucus as he curls into himself. Tommy’s still bleeding all over this warehouse floor with no way-

His phone! He is so smart.

He calls Wilbur first, scrolling through his recents and tapping the number, and he holds his breath as he waits. And waits. And *waits*.

“*You’ve reached Wilbur Soot-*” Tommy hangs up quickly, sucking in a sharp breath that sounds more like a sob than actual breathing. Wilbur said- well. Wilbur never really said anything. But there comes a kind of expectation with constantly trying to shove Tommy into



the little brother category. There comes a kind of expectation with being one of the only people Tommy actively wants to be held by.

There comes a kind of expectation that Tommy had *no right* having, and now he's been disappointed. Again.

*"This is Philza Minecraft, and I can't come to the phone right now-"*

*"You've reached Commissioner Puffy; please leave a message-"*

*"The number for **Dream** could not be-"*

*"Sapnap speaking; you just missed me-"*

And again, and again, and again. Tommy is running out of numbers, and for a moment, he considers calling Henry. Henry left to go visit his grandchildren in France, though, and Tommy doesn't have any more numbers. There are only two numbers left, and he can't call Violet.

He wants to call Sam. He wants to call Sam *so bad*.

But Hannah's atrium was on fire. Her atrium was on fire and she was going to die and it's all Tommy's fault, so he won't call Sam. Sam needs to focus on the people who actually need him.

He'll die on this dirty floor all alone, he realizes. Nobody answered their phone and Sam is just a *guy* and Tommy can't expect him to come save him. He's just Sam. He's just- he's just a guy with a coffee shop and a dog and a too-big heart. He's just Sam.

On a whim, Tommy sends him his location. If someone asks him -if he lives- he'll blame it on being blinded by tears. He'll blame it on a lot of things that aren't just wanting someone

who cares about him to find his body.

He just wants to be buried with his parents.

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“I didn’t do anything this time! I swear!” Hannah tells him -because she doesn’t *plead*- as several firetrucks work on getting the blaze down.

Quackity stands off to the side with the Architect and his two children, the four of them pouring over the plans necessary to rebuild the atrium once it’s been thoroughly extinguished. Everyone is in their civilian clothes, but Phil’s people are keeping the media at bay with a gregarious display of charity outside of the barriers down the road. Sam just hopes Wilbur and Techno aren’t making promises they won’t be allowed to keep.

“Then why is your atrium in *literal* flames?” Boomer stresses, and Sam wonders the same thing. Hannah’s the kind of person who takes what she wants without question -she’s earned it, in her opinion- and people rarely feel the need to get it back from her. Maybe that’s the weird plant pheromones she uses on them. He doesn’t know.

“I don’t *know*,” she snaps back. She huffs under her breath when Ponk rubs more of the healing salve down one of the burns on her arm, but she doesn’t move too far. Just leans a little further into her twin and grits her teeth as the salve reacts to Ponk’s powers. They’re made specifically to speed up the healing process, and considering they got to them so soon, there’s a good chance it won’t scar.

Sam leaves them there to approach the firemen putting out the blaze, but he catches sight of Puffy off to the side and moves toward her instead. Her hair is braided back today, tucked under a beanie that barely manages to fit over her head.

“What do we know?” He asks her, voice hushed as he waves Quackity away. Puffy watches the blaze closely, studying the flames with a little shrug. “Is he out of there yet?”

“I’m out of there,” Sapnap answers, beat-up converses hitting the ground with a thud as he steps out of a small swirl of flame. Puffy makes a fuss of patting out a few of the small flames that still linger in his hair, and his cheeks flush under the attention. “I couldn’t stay in too long because those guys know how to aim their fucking hoses, but it definitely looked like sabotage.”

“Sabotage?” Sam repeats softly.

Sapnap nods, rocking back on his heels as he tucks his hands into his pockets. “Sabotage. Like- gasoline and matches sabotage.”

“Someone tried to kill Hannah,” he realizes suddenly, but Sapnap shakes his head.

“They might’ve. It’s pretty minimal burning if it really was an attempt on her life, though, isn’t it?”

Sam glances over his shoulder at where his kids -they’re not *really* his kids, but they’ve all cycled through his house to escape the system at some point, so it doesn’t matter- have gathered together to poke fun at each other. Hannah’s arm is healed, but what Sapnap says makes sense. The burn on her arm hadn’t been that large. Had this been an attempt on her life, it wasn’t a very good one.

“So what were they here for, then?” Puffy asks the question they’re all thinking, arms crossed into her coat to keep the cold away. “Why set the atrium on fire?”

Ponk appears under Sam’s arm, mask tugged higher over their face as they lean against his side. “I mean, maybe they knew what would happen?” She offers, and they all turn to look at her with a frown. She shrugs, turning to watch the last of the flames go out through the glass of the atrium.

“I don’t know,” Ponk shrugs, and when he turns back to them, his brows are furrowed. “Look at everyone who’s here. All the big names come out when one of the kids is in danger, even the other kids. Phil, Wilbur, and Techno are all down with the press. Quackity’s up here, and so are you.” She gestures to Sapnap with her chin. “So are we. Maybe they know.”

Puffy's brows furrow, and she bites at her bottom lip for a moment before shrugging. "What would they even be bringing us up here for? There's nothing going on, right? No alerts on your phones?"

There's a pause as they all tug their phones from their pockets, and then-

"All I have is a call from Tommy," Sapnap reports quietly.

"He called me, too," Puffy murmurs, and Sam's heart drops through the soles of his feet to leak into the cracked pavement beneath them. "No voicemail, though."

"None for me either."

Sam finally pulls his own phone from his pocket, but there are no calls from Tommy. Just a shared location and a smiley face, but for whatever reason, that takes his resolve to remain here and throws it into the gutter.

And then, *oh*, and then.

"Ser," the firefighter who's approached them says, handing Puffy something that's been singed until it's nearly unrecognizable. "We found this alongside matches; there was definitely an accelerant used. Could you come with us to check it out?"

"Yeah, of course." Puffy hands Sam the burnt item and follows behind the firefighter, and that's when Sam really gets a good look at it. It's almost unrecognizable, but he can see it just around the blackened left edge.

A ram. A satanic ram.

“That’s-” Sapnap breathes, and Sam is already turning on his heel to head for his truck.

“Go find Dream,” he directs as he tugs his truck door open. “I’ve got a location, but Tommy sent me this twenty minutes ago. We need Dream’s clones to canvas the area.”

“On it,” Sapnap responds, and then he disappears in a swirl of flames.

Ponk slides into the passenger's seat before they speed out of the parking lot, flying down the road to blow past the reporters and Phil. His sons stand just behind him, and Sam barely spares them a glance.

“Call Wilbur and ask him if Tommy called him,” he snaps, desperate to shift the blame and guilt that’s festering in his chest onto anyone but himself. “Someone had to have answered him. Someone has to know what’s going on.”

Ponk calls Wilbur four different times before giving up and calling Technoblade, and the man answers on the third ring.

“Has Tommy called Wilbur?” They ask, and once the phone is on speaker, Sam can hear the sound of Techno asking his brother. There’s muttering on the other side before Techno’s low rumble filters through the line with a soft ‘yes.’

Ponk goes to hang up as Sam slams his hands against the wheel, but then Techno asks quietly, “Is he okay?”

“We don’t know,” Sam answers. His knuckles turn white from how tightly he’s gripping the steering wheel, but there’s *something* inside of him that knows something is wrong. Tommy’s location was a warehouse on the docks. Sam locked Tommy in the fucking *coffee shop* so he would be *safe*, and now he’s at the fucking docks. “He called a bunch of us but didn’t leave a voicemail, and he sent me his location twenty minutes ago.”

There's a scuffle as the phone is fought over, and then Wilbur is hissing venom through the static of a bad connection. "Where? I'm getting in my car right now; where the fuck is he? Send it to me."

"The press-" Techno says faintly from the other side, but Wilbur is having none of it.

"Who *cares* about the press? Tommy might be dying-"

"Do *not* say that," Sam all but snarls, and Ponk presses a palm to his shoulder to try and ground him. Considering they've run several red lights, the gesture isn't working. "Don't you *ever* suggest something like that. Tommy's *fine*."

"Sam-"

"Hang up," Sam mutters, and Ponk does so with a little shrug. They ride in relative silence for the rest of the ride, but the second they grind to a stop on the docks, it's like everything comes to life.

Everything except *Tommy*.

He lies on his side in an ever-growing pool of what Sam wishes wasn't blood, back turned to them. He doesn't look like he's breathing, and that's what really sends the spike of terror directly through his chest.

Ponk skids around on their knees as Sam thuds to the ground behind Tommy, turning him onto his back and inhaling sharply at the blood staining his left shoulder. The red contrasts so poorly with the soft blue cotton of the Neutral Grounds employee sweatshirt. Even the little doodle of Fran embroidered into it has been dyed a nasty, bloody red. In order to find a pulse, Sam's fingers delve into the blood that coats the side of Tommy's neck. He swallows back the tears that jump to burn his eyes at the sight of the dirty ones on Tommy's face, but he finds a pulse. It's faint, but it's there.

He's alive. Tommy won't be dead at eighteen.

"You're okay," Sam murmurs as he tugs the pocket knife from within his back pocket to hand to Ponk. His partner begins to cut away at the sweatshirt while Sam keeps Tommy propped up. He pets through the bloody hair on the side of Tommy's head, and he ignores the warm feeling of blood that coats his fingers. "You're all good, kid. Ponk'll fix you up. You'll be okay."

"The bullet's still inside," Ponk whispers, and all of Sam's hope crumbles away. "I can't heal him with it in there."

"You have to."

"I can't." Now, Ponk sounds like he's crying, too.

"He'll *die*," Sam pleads, but there is no rebuttal. There's nothing but the truth between two potential parents and a child who was never quite theirs on the bloody floor of a sea-salted warehouse. This is Tommy's last truth.

"I'm so sorry," Sam whispers against Tommy's only clean temple, and his tears mingle with the dried ones on a paling, bloody cheek.

This is the closest to 'I love you' he'll ever get to breathe.

## Chapter End Notes

hey besties my dad literally died like eleven days ago (if you follow my twitter, @nervousn8, you know this already) so my updates are gonna be Real sporadic and they probably wont make any sense. like. it'll be even worse than it already was. sorry in advance but also a dead dad gives me a bit of a pass you feel me

anyway. that boy dead haha. yikes.

if there are spelling errors shut your fucking mouth im invoking the dead dad card



# Motion Sickness by Phoebe Bridgers Slash P

## Chapter Summary

“You almost died.”

Very good, Wilbur. State those facts, big man. Live laugh love. Skate fast, eat ass.  
Tommy is going to get a therapist specifically to complain about how dumb Wilbur is.

## Chapter Notes

besties they discuss suicide in this one. ankle scooter disease, if you will. thank you aster  
for that one <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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It’s dark in here. The black pool in Tommy’s head, he means. It’s strange to be somewhere that possesses both everything and the absence of it, yet that’s what this place is. Silent and seeping with lost things that have no desire to be found.

Tommy’s quite like those things in a way. He lies within the frothing waves of the black pool and simply breathes, watching the way the void plays out before him. His brain will trick him sometimes, show him little bits and pieces of what could almost be mistaken for his friends. Sometimes it will gift him Sam on a silver platter, dark circles under his eyes or his head in his hands. Sometimes it hands him Phil, blue eyes sad as he refuses to make eye contact.

It’d given him Dream, once. The man had removed his mask to reveal green eyes set into a scarred face, and that’s how Tommy knew none of this was real.

At some points, he sees Technoblade; at others Quackity, and with him come Arsonist and a man Tommy has never met before. He... he starts to wonder if maybe things are a little more real than he’s been letting himself believe. The things inside of the void are not meant to exist outside of them, but if that were the case, Ghostbur would have remained what he thought to

be a figment of his imagination. Tommy would not be dreaming up people he's never met before.

More often than not, it's Sam or Wilbur. They're always quiet.

They don't talk to Tommy.

For now, though, he lingers here. Here in the void that smells and feels and sounds like his mother's bedroom. A heart monitor beeps somewhere behind him, but his mother's shoulder isn't underneath his cheek. In fact, he's entirely alone outside of a single point of contact on the outside of his hip. He twitches his fingers, but they don't brush up against his hip.

Then the void is suddenly gone and bright white assaults his eyes instead, peering at him with knowing eyes and the gentle quirk of scarred lips.

"Big Q?" Tommy croaks, throat dry and entire body flaring with pain. "What're you-"

"Easy, big guy," Quackity soothes, holding out the tiniest cup of water Tommy has ever seen. "They're weaning you off fucking morphine, by the way. I think this is the first time you've been lucid in days."

Mmm. Drugs. Those are so good for his body. Definitely not going to risk an addiction with that, oh no.

"Fun," he mutters back, and Quackity snorts a laugh.

Their relationship is weird. Quackity is a lot less aggressive with his methods of Forceful Little Brother-ing than Wilbur is, but the number of "custody battles" he and Wilbur have had over Tommy is kind of funny. Tubbo's the one that started calling them custody battles. Tommy just genuinely thought they were going to kiss the first time.

Gay people. You can't take them anywhere.

Quackity sobers as he takes the cup from Tommy, and he reaches up to readjust his beanie. His posture shifts in such a way that tells Tommy they're going to be talking about unpleasant things. No thank you, actually.

"Do you wanna know?" Quackity asks him, gesturing to the shoulder Tommy refuses to look at. "The nurses gave us the opportunity to tell you in the event you wanted some sugar-coated, non-medical version of how fucked your arm is."

"Us?" Tommy asks, and this time Quackity's smile fades altogether.

He gestures around the room vaguely, and this time he actually sees the other people in the room. Wilbur sleeps on one of the couches in the room on the wall opposite Tommy's bed, head propped up on his fist as though he'd been watching him. Behind Quackity, Dream, Arsonist, and the man Tommy thought he dreamt are squished together on another couch. They're sleeping, too.

When he glances out the window over Dream's head, he finds that it's dark.

"It's late," Quackity mutters, shifting in his chair with a heavy sigh. "Sam's on your other side, but he's not awake right now."

Sam. Right. Sam who Tommy texted his location to. Sam who. who probably found Tommy bleeding out all over the floor. Sam who is a normal fucking guy that didn't need to have to do that. Right.

"Come on, man, don't cry. I'm not good with tears." Quackity sounds uncomfortable enough that it actually makes Tommy laugh, but the laughter jostles his shoulder and he's keening with the pain before he realizes it. It's almost funny how everyone in the room moves both consciously and not at the sound, and Tommy bites down on it the second the fingers on his left wrist twitch.

After a moment, Tommy swallows his pain and inhales as deeply as he can. He's still. Everything is still kind of strange. His head still feels fuzzy. "What's wrong with my arm?" He finally asks, and Quackity fucking *shrugs*.

"The bullet hit one of your bones, but I don't remember which one they said. It made a bunch of bone fragments lodge in different parts of your shoulder, and I *think* it fucked up one of your nerves? Maybe? That could just be something I've gotten mixed up after all the research Wilbur was doing." That sounds like Wilbur, honestly, the hypochondriac that he is. "You were in surgery for a long time. Gonna be doing a *lot* of physical therapy if you want to use that arm again."

"Incredibly awful. I am going to complain about this so much."

Quackity snorts and shakes his head, leaning back in his chair with a little grin. "I expect nothing less from you."

They're quiet, and Tommy is content to listen to the little sounds from the various people in the room as they sleep. Wilbur is snoring, as is Sam. Dream might be, too, but Tommy can't really see him behind Quackity.

It... it hits him that he's alive, eventually. He won't compare it to being shot in the chest because he's been shot in the shoulder not long ago, and he'll tell you with no minced words that realizing you maybe don't want to die as bad as you thought you did is *nothing* like being shot. No, this is something softer. This is a swooping where the shot had been an explosion. This has his eyes snapping to the flickering light above him with a sharp inhale, and he can't decide if he's enjoying this realization or not.

It almost steals him entirely, but then Sam shifts where he's using the edge of the bed as his pillow, and the top of his head presses more firmly into Tommy's hip. It's grounding, and that makes it all that much worse. Tommy already has a dad. Tommy's going to live to make sure the people who murdered his parents are arrested or killed, and he's going to take his mother off life support. And then he's going to die. His wealth will be distributed to those who had helped raise him first and then the rest will go to people he knows need it.

It's in his will. Everything is set as it should be.

Even still, part of him wishes he'd died on that warehouse floor.

Even still, he's not sure he wants to die at all anymore.

Quietly, after the nurse has come and gone two times, Tommy voices this to Quackity. They're close but not too close, and though Sam doesn't seem to know that Tommy was someone else at the beginning of the year, Quackity looks at Tommy like he does. Quackity looks at Tommy with a deeper understanding than Sam or Boomer or Wilbur.

Quackity looks at him the way Tubbo and Ranboo do.

"I don't think I want to die anymore, Big Q," he whispers, and Quackity glances up from his phone. "But I don't. I don't know if I want to live, either."

They're quiet again, a silence so loud Tommy feels like it will render him deaf, and then Quackity sighs. He sits up in his chair and leans his elbows on the bed, holding his hand up until Tommy lifts his functional hand to grab it.

The other hand is tied up in a sling against his chest so he won't move his arm. He doesn't like it.

Quackity's palms are calloused, but his hands are warm.

"I'm gonna be honest with you, Tommy," he says, sounding more tired than he had earlier. There are bags under his eyes that Tommy hadn't noticed before. "Your actions affect other people now. You- listen. If you were still that- that *guy* from before, the one no one knew who lived in South Side and worked at some pizza place with no name, maybe you could've gotten away with suicide. No one would have given a shit about some unnamed kid from South Side. Especially not when your records say you're a problem foster kid who never managed to find permanent placement."

Tommy's eyes are burning and his throat hurts, but Quackity keeps going.

"I'm not saying this to be a dick to you. I'm saying this because that persona you made? That was *me*. I was the no-name kid from South Side that the system failed. You picked a good fucking... I don't know, *cosplay* or whatever, because *nobody cares about kids from South Side*. But you know what, Tommy? You're not just some kid from South Side, not to most of the people in this room. They don't know what I do—hell, Karl doesn't know who you are outside of the way Sapnap goes on and on about you—but you're not just some no-name kid anymore. You're *Tommy*, now. Your name has weight."

There's a sob choked somewhere behind a gasp in his throat, and Tommy grips Quackity's hand even tighter as hot tears streak quickly down his cheeks. He tries to keep his cries quiet considering there are five people sleeping in this room as he attempts to get his breathing under control. Quackity gives him the time he needs, squeezing back whenever Tommy clutches at him again.

It takes a long time. Too long, really, for his tears to calm down enough that he can open his mouth without sobbing. That doesn't mean his voice is strong when he does finally speak. It makes Tommy feel weak to know that a little speech from Quackity is all it took to have him drowning in tears.

"I miss my dad," he whispers at last, squeezing his eyes shut and doing his best to ignore the way his shoulder flares as he inhales deeply once again. "And- and my *mom*. They were supposed to- I was supposed to- to die when they did, and I *didn't*, and now I feel so *bad*, Big Q. I was supposed to die, and- and no one was supposed to love me again, but- but- I—"

He swallows harshly, gripping so tightly to Quackity's hand he's afraid he might hurt him, but Quackity holds him back just as tightly. He drags a thumb over Tommy's knuckles. The discomfort is back on his face at the sight of Tommy's emotions, but it's not an unwelcome sight. It's so fucking normal, actually, that it helps Tommy calm down more than sympathy may have.

"Survivor's guilt is normal, especially when you know you were supposed to die, too," Quackity tells him not unkindly, and Tommy shudders. "You're not feeling anything wrong, man. No one will ever think less of you for missing your parents or wishing you'd gone with them. No one is going to love you any less. But that's- you see, that's the thing. These people

love you. You matter so much to everyone you've met. You can't just disappear without there being consequences."

The nurse comes back again, and they both turn to look at her. "Everything alright?" She asks gently, and they both nod. She steps around Sam to get to Tommy's shoulder, and this is the first time he's had to actually look at his shoulder or Sam. Neither one seems to be in very good shape, but where Tommy's shoulder has been cleaned and dressed in equally clean bandages, Sam looks greasy. He's got a beard coming in. Yuck.

"He's barely left your side, you know," the nurse says sweetly. She jerks her chin in Wilbur's direction as she finishes changing the bags of fluid on his drip stand. "He's been sleeping on that couch since you got out of surgery."

She comes and goes quickly. Sam and Wilbur keep sleeping. When Tommy turns back to Quackity, he's met by bright green eyes over Quackity's shoulder.

"You'll be okay, you know that?" Quackity asks at last, squeezing Tommy's hand once more. "We've got you."

Dream stands from the couch after making sure Sapnap will still be comfortable where he's sleeping, and then he comes up to stand by the bed as well. One of his hands comes down on Tommy's shoulder while the other fiddles with the pocket of his hoodie.

"Say it back," Dream demands, fingers tightening on Tommy's shoulder. "Say it *back*."

Tommy holds his breath, and he lets go of Quackity's hand to grab for Dream's. Green eyes meet blue, and Tommy chokes on another stupid sob. "You've got me," he whispers. His fingers scrabble for purchase within Dream's, and they clutch at each other a little too tightly.

"We've got you."

How many people in this city look at Tommy and see someone they don't want to lose? How many people found out about him getting shot and piled into this hospital room? He thought he'd just dreamt of Phil, but that means Phil had been here. Phil had come to see him. *Technoblade* had come to see him. Others he can only remember the blurriest images of had been here, too.

The pain medication the nurse gave him before she left puts him to sleep again; the relief from pain making way for heavy exhaustion. He doesn't go back to the pool this time, though, and instead revels in the complete unconsciousness that is REM sleep. REM sleep Tommy's beloved. He would marry it if he could. He might try.

When he wakes up, the sun is coming over the other side of the building across the courtyard. There's a fruit cup on the weird little tray off to the side of the bed.

Wilbur is sitting in the chair Quackity had been sitting in whenever Tommy was awake last. He looks tired, but he seems just as relieved.

"Hey, Toms," he mutters, relief palpable in the slump of his shoulders and the tone of his voice. "Big Q said you were awake earlier. Everyone had to go to work, though, but not me."

They make small talk while Tommy eats his stupid fruit cup and drinks more water. One of the nurses helps him go to the bathroom and then back into bed.

Wilbur talks about Fundy.

Tommy doesn't want to die.

"I think we need to talk," Wilbur says, going for his normal bravado but finding none of it. He clears his throat and takes Tommy's hand again. "About what happened, I mean."



Tommy waits. There really isn't much else he can do besides wait, so he does. Wilbur will say what he needs to eventually, and Tommy will say something back. This is how conversations have always worked, and this is how they will continue to work.

He shouldn't need to explain conversations to himself, but he's nervous. It's twisting up the center of his chest and encouraging him to throw up the meager fruit cup he just ate. He won't do that, obviously, but he wants to.

"You almost died."

Very good, Wilbur. State those facts, big man. Live laugh love. Skate fast, eat ass. Tommy is going to get a therapist specifically to complain about how dumb Wilbur is.

"And I- well. That's not fair. You almost died, and now I know what you look like when you're dying, and that's not fair. You- I know it's not fair of me to say this, but you're like a brother to me." This is the part where Tommy is supposed to say his line. When he says the brother line, Wilbur says the crying line. When Wilbur says the brother line, Tommy says the crying line. This is how it's supposed to be.

But Tommy is *burning* with anger he didn't think he'd feel. It makes his cheeks grow red and tears scald his eyes, and he grasps Wilbur's hand even tighter.

"Tommy?"

"You want to tell me about 'fair'?" Tommy hisses, practically vibrating where he half-lies in this stupid fucking hospital bed. "You want to talk about *'fair,'* Wilbur?"

Wilbur's eyebrows are scrunching up with concern, but he doesn't pull his hand away. His other hand comes up to the side of Tommy's head, and he runs his thumb along Tommy's temple. "You can let it out. It's alright."

The laugh that punches out of Tommy's chest is so aggressive it makes his shoulder feel like it's on fire. His heart rate monitor is beeping a tiny bit too fast behind them.

“What isn't *fair* is the fact that I know what you look like when you're dead. What isn't- what isn't *fair* is the fact that I know what your neck sounds like when it fucking *breaks*.” And there it is: the concern melting to confusion to anger to dawning, all-consuming horror. The choked noise in the back of Wilbur's throat tastes like victory. “You're a piece of *shit*, Wilbur. I was *eight*.”

That image is branded into his mind for the rest of his life, and picturing it again makes his angry tears spill down his cheeks. Wilbur sags heavily against the side of the hospital bed, grasping Tommy's hand like a lifeline.

“I fucking hate you,” Tommy hisses, hiccuping on a sob at the same time devastation makes its home on the planes of Wilbur's face. “You- you ruined *everything*.”

But Tommy doesn't let go of Wilbur's hand, and he doesn't move away when Wilbur presses his forehead into Tommy's hair.

## Chapter End Notes

why do i keep updating my fics on big days. today marks one month of my dad being dead and im out here going heehoo neutral grounds update :D

wouldn't it be awful if i have tommy finally decide he wants to live and then i kill him anyway?

also!! im working on a cryptid au!! im very excited about it and idk if yall will care about it but if you will: yay!

# Blub Blub Besties We Are Drowning

## Chapter Summary

“I have a confession,” Tommy says instead of, “Yeah, I’m okay.” And what is this? The church? Prime isn’t here. Tommy hasn’t been to confession in ages. Leave him alone, God.

“Alright,” Sam says slowly, measured and gentle and overall irritating. “Take your time, okay? You don’t have to rush this.”

## Chapter Notes

hey yall the first two bits are technically from before the last chapter

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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Ponk had never gotten to meet Tommy.

It’s a simple fact of the matter, something that he’s never bothered to try and fix. This was another one of Sam’s problem children. This was someone like Quackity, like Hannah and Boomer, who Sam had pulled off the street and taken under his wing.

Sam knows this. He knows that Ponk had never gotten to meet Tommy, and he knows that she was waiting for Sam to give the okay. He knows that, given time, he would have been okay with it. He didn’t want to overwhelm Tommy with new people who would care for him wholeheartedly, so they were waiting.

But that doesn’t mean Sam didn’t tell Ponk about Tommy. Their partnership had been full of ups and downs—and a fuck ton of therapy, but that’s neither here nor there—but Ponk has always been kind to the children that Sam has taken in. Tommy may have been older than the rest, but that didn’t mean they weren’t planning to love him as if he were their own.

Now.

Now, Sam is staring down at Tommy's blood coating his hands. It's under his nails, soaking into the sleeves that had been slowly slinking back down his arms. It's on his face.

Tommy had been wearing a matching sweatshirt. Soft colors, a little doodle of Fran on it. The EMTs had cut the sweatshirt right off of him on the warehouse floor. They'd yanked Sam off of him—off of his kid, his son in everything but blood—and pushed him behind the police line into Wilbur and then Phil who had apparently followed them there, and it'd only been Ponk who kept him from decking an officer and pushing his way back to Tommy.

They were matching. Soft sweatshirts soaked in blood, red bleeding the dainty colors black.

They'd taken him. They'd packed his shoulder full of gauze and they'd *taken him*, and Wilbur had been yelling and Ponk had been answering but Sam was stuck on that warehouse floor, folded over a boy that wasn't there anymore.

"Come on, Sammie," Ponk says somewhere through the fog, and Sam finally pulls himself from that bloody floor to this hospital waiting room, staring at the blood under his nails. When he looks up, he finds Ponk's hands hovering just in front of him. "We're going to the bathroom to wash your hands. Quackity is bringing you a new shirt."

Sam's tongue is heavy in his mouth, but he lets Ponk pull him up anyway. He keeps his eyes on his partner instead of his hands as they stumble into the bathroom together. It's only when the water comes on and Ponk lathers their hands in soap that Sam risks looking back at their joint hands, and that's a mistake.

Because. Because Ponk is washing Tommy's blood off Sam's hands and down the drain. Sam is letting Ponk wash Tommy away.

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The breaking of bone under Wilbur's knuckles is therapeutic in a way he doesn't often let himself experience. He tries to be careful with the force he uses on most criminals, but these ones are special. These ones are different.

These are the ones caught on the cameras around the docks. These are the ones on the cameras at Neutral Grounds. These are the ones that hurt Tommy.

Wilbur isn't a violent person by nature. He'd like that on the record. He's always been a relatively passive person until the people or things he cares about are involved, in which case he tends to be more manipulative than anything else. Physical violence is not his prerogative.

He would also like it on the record that—up until recently—he followed Phil's rules by the book. No killing, no unnecessary displays of violence, and no revenge.

But that, see, is where Wilbur has made some amends. He may not be a violent person by nature, but he is vengeful. He is not someone who will simply sit by and let those he loves be hurt without punishment. He is a man of spite, and he is a man of vengeance. If that vengeance leads to total annihilation, well, that's not his problem.

It's a strange feeling to shove his hand through someone's chest when it's intangible only to make it tangible again. The muscles and bones that were there should, by all logic, be stuck inside of his forearm when it regains its tangibility. Instead, things such as lungs and ribs and muscles are squished out of the way. His power means his own mass takes precedence over theirs.

The man Wilbur had just shoved his hand into the chest of gasps and grabs at Wilbur's forearm, but it's a little too late for that. Wilbur gives the happiest, likely deranged smirk he can manage, and then he squishes the beating heart between his fingers. It's satisfying to watch someone die by your hand.

He understands why Technoblade does it.

The woman who'd shoved the needle into Tommy's neck is whimpering where she's backed herself into a corner, and Wilbur delights in her fear. She *should* be afraid. To think she could help someone murder Tommy and not face consequences was a mistake she won't live to make again.

"I'm sorry," she snivels, grappling at her side for a gun that isn't there. "I'm so sorry, I didn't mean it. I was just doing my job. I was just--"

Her words turn into a gargle of blood when Wilbur squashes her heart in his hand, too, and he wipes the blood that gets stuck on his hand back onto her face. It doesn't do much to get rid of it, but it's satisfying. This is better than waiting around doing nothing while Tommy is in surgery. Phil's at the hospital for that, and he'll text Wilbur updates.

When someone finds these bodies, one of Tubbo's programs will catch their faces and names as people who are in the weird cult that killed the Kraken family, and the people who are hunting Tommy. This is the vengeance Wilbur wasn't allowed to give Thomas. He'll give it to Tommy instead.

-----

Tommy'd almost drowned when he was thirteen.

He thinks about it sometimes. Sitting in the backseat of his best friend's older sister's car. He'd stolen it that night because apparently she'd been teaching him how to drive when their parents weren't home, and he'd texted Tommy and all of their friends about taking it for a drive. Being thirteen and feeling invincible, Tommy has snuck his way out of the fancy building he and his parents lived in and slunk into the backseat.

They'd been over the edge of a bridge not even twenty minutes later, nose-down in the silt at the bottom of a small river.

He doesn't think about it too often, honestly. Sometimes, sure, but not often. They hadn't been in the water for very long, but they'd been in there long enough that the water had started rising in the car. Tommy can remember watching it pour in. He can remember the

woman on the phone telling them to hold their breath as first responders broke the windows open, and they swam out.

It wasn't bad, but Tommy remembers it every now and again.

Like right now. The hospital room is filling with water.

Tommy sits up on his bed, knees as close to his chest as they'll get with his dumb sling for his arm, and he watches the water rise. It's lapping at the bottom of the couches, now. He can hear it pouring in when it hits the water already flooding the floor, and he watches it rise slowly around the legs of the plastic chairs beside his bed.

Wilbur has not come back to visit since Tommy told him.

He'd claimed he needed to think about what was happening, and there were stories on the news of Phantom being extra rough with the criminals he apprehended, but Wilbur has not come back. Fucking *Technoblade* had visited more than Wilbur—to the point where Tommy had started calling him Techno. That's how bad it is. Wilbur hasn't come back.

Tommy is being discharged today.

It's strange to think about. The nurse comes in to check on him, and water sloshes around her knees with every step she takes, but she pays it no mind. He can barely hear her over the rush of the water when she asks him if he's okay, but he tells her he is, and she gives him a smile before she offers to help him change.

He looks at where the water is sliding in from the place where the ceiling meets the wall, and then he nods. She won't address the water, so he won't either.

He turns away from her as he gets off the bed, squeezing his eyes shut as tightly as he can when he pushes his feet down into the rushing water. It almost steals his breath away when the water travels all the way up to his hips as his feet touch the floor. He grapples for the edge

of the bed to steady himself, and then he forces his way through the water until he can get to the bathroom. The nurse wades just behind him, gentle words of encouragement on her tongue.

It feels... *wrong* to be helped. Tommy isn't sure he deserves it. But he also knows that if he were to hear anyone who had been through what he had say that, he would tell them they do. They deserve to be helped because the world has done them wrong.

But this is Tommy, and Tommy knows who he is.

The nurse leaves him in the bathroom when she's done helping him under the pretense he's going to fix his hair. Instead, Tommy tips his head back and holds his breath as the water closes over his nose. He keeps his eyes shut as well, tears burning the backs of his eyelids as he fights the burning in his chest. He has only ever almost drowned once, and he knows enough to not want to do it again.

When inhaling becomes inevitable, Tommy gasps. He expects to inhale water, but all he gets is clinical, clean air. It nearly knocks him off his feet. His eyes snap down to the mirror, but his hair and his clothes are dry. There's not a drop of water in sight outside of the tears that have gotten caught in his eyelashes. There is no water, he isn't drowning, and he's being discharged today.

Wilbur has not come to visit since he told him.

In the main little room, his phone buzzes with a text. Tommy had not been privy to the group chat that had apparently been created to decide who would get to drive him home. Techno had been sending screenshots to a group chat he had with Tubbo and Ranboo—why Techno was included, Tommy will never know—and they had, in turn, sent those screenshots to a group chat they have with Tommy. There was a lot of group chat hoping. Tommy's kind of glad he wasn't involved.

He's a little upset that they're discussing who's picking him up without him, but it's okay. Henry is still very much out of the country right now, and Tommy doesn't exactly what to be uberating anywhere when there's the chance he could die at any moment.



Whatever argument had been had, Sam had won. It'd come down to a vote between him and Phil and a third option for letting Tommy fend for himself, and most people voted for Sam. Tommy had seen that screenshot from their messages and kind of felt a little offended, in all honesty. It's like they're setting him up.

Sure enough, when he returns to his phone, there's a message from Sam telling him he's out in the waiting room. Tommy swallows the bile in his throat and reminds himself that there isn't actually water sloshing around his ankles, and then he collects his little bag of belongings that someone had brought for him and turns—only to come face to face with Sam.

And Tommy is *weak* for allowing himself to fall forward against the taller man, but Sam cradles him like he's fragile, and Tommy *needs that*. It's like the world is shut out from inside of this stupid, warm hug. Tommy breathes against the onslaught of tears for everything that's happened to him recently and decides to blame those tears on any kind of pain in his shoulder. Maybe he's shaking, or maybe Sam is, but it doesn't matter.

"You good, kid?" Sam asks into Tommy's hair, and for a small, terrible second, Tommy almost says no. It's pathetic, and it's weakness, but Tommy has already made it clear to himself that he is as weak as they come.

"I'm just tired," he answers instead. "Wanna go home."

"We can do that," Sam tells him softly, and even though it feels like it's going to eat him alive, Tommy breaks the hug. Sam is the kind of person to hold you until you're ready to be let go of, and Tommy is in the kind of mood to be held until he literally melts into Sam's being. He's not going to let himself do that, but the fact remains.

Seeing Sam's stupid pickup truck nearly makes Tommy cry all over again. He's not going to dissect this response, but it's another thing to file away from himself to think about later. It's when they get in that truck, though, that Tommy realizes he may have miscalculated.

"Ranboo is at your apartment if you wanted to head there," Sam starts, trying to be helpful and making Tommy want to die a little bit, "but—and tell me if I'm overstepping because I'll stop—there's a guest bedroom at my house. There are two of them, actually, but Boomer still comes home to bother me sometimes, so I try not to let people sleep in his old room. If you wanted to, you could stay with me. I could help you while you're healing."

Could Tommy get away with flinging himself out of the truck? He could avoid the conversation that way. They also just passed his favorite pizza place, and he's kind of in the mood for excuses. Excuses are so sexy. Tommy might be asexual, but he could go for some excuses right now. Not food though. His stomach will actually die.

"Tommy? You okay?"

Whoops. He feels like this happens a little too often.

"I have a confession," Tommy says instead of, "Yeah, I'm okay." And what is this? The church? Prime isn't here. Tommy hasn't been to confession in ages. Leave him alone, God.

"Alright," Sam says slowly, measured and gentle and overall irritating. "Take your time, okay? You don't have to rush this."

Meh meh meh, I'm Sam and I am so understanding even though you have been lying to me for the entire time I've known you. Tommy hates this. Maybe he is misdirecting his stress to Sam, who cares. Life is agony. When is it Tommy's turn to be happy?

"So I'm- okay. I don't know how to tell you this." You are off to a great start, king. Keep it up.

Tommy resolutely does not say anything else, and he also absolutely does not see the looks Sam keeps throwing at him. Nope. Tommy is suddenly blind. Life is so crazy when it works out like this.

"You can tell me anything. You know that, right?" Yes, and that's the worst part. He- he told Wilbur the truth, and now Wilbur won't answer his texts. Wilbur, who has been glued to his side for ages, hasn't spoken to him since he told him. How is Tommy supposed to reveal this lie to Sam? What would ever make him willingly burn this relationship to the ground after the one he had with Wilbur went up in flames? It was all his fault to begin with, and now he's supposed to do it again?

“I have a different address that we can go to,” Tommy mutters a little bitterly, angry tears rising in his eyes as his cheeks burn with shame. It tastes like acid on his tongue to admit this, but he has to. He needs to go back and see his mom because it’s been *so long*, and it makes him feel awful to know that he hasn’t. She can’t see him back but he *misses her*.

Sam follows his directions without question, and it makes Tommy feel even worse. He doesn’t ask any questions, doesn’t pry, just takes exits and goes down side roads. His expression grows confused as they approach the nicer part of L’Manburg, but his face smooths out when they’re allowed to pass through the gate at the edge of Tommy’s property.

They pull up to the front of the house, a mansion that was spread around on the news for ages after Tommy’s parents had died and he himself had gone missing, and Sam turns the truck off.

Tommy keeps his head down, shameful tears burning in his eyes, and he only jumps a little bit when Sam squeezes his knee.

“I’m not mad at you for lying,” Sam tells him gently, and Tommy bites his tongue when Sam immediately tackles the root of his shame. “You were scared, and you were traumatized, and you needed to find some way to survive. I’m not mad at you.”

He keeps his face tucked toward the window, staring at his own eyes in the side mirror. He doesn’t want to look at Sam. “You sure?”

Sam squeezes his knee once again. “I’m sure.”

Tommy breathes a heavy sigh as relief sags his shoulders. Sam rubs his back instead of squeezing his knee, and Tommy lets himself have this for only a few minutes. Only a few minutes. He can pretend that everything is okay for a little while, and then he’ll go inside, and he’ll see his mom.

“Thanks,” he whispers, and if the word is wet, neither of them mentions it.

## Chapter End Notes

HELLO BELOVED BESTIES LIFE IS AGONY AND WE ARE NOW ON THE TWO MONTH ANNIVERSARY OF DEAD DAD. my hands are freezing and i am mentally ill how are YOU GUYS?? heads up if wilbur mcfricken soot shows up in my general fanfic vicinity i can and will steal his knees this is MY DOMAIN. i see no god up here except for me. my hands are so cold i cant feel my fingies help

# Omg Wow Chapter 20 That's So Crazy

## Chapter Summary

“Am I supposed to just excuse the shit you put me through because you broke your dumbass code for me?”

“Ideally? Yes. Realistically? No.”

“At least you’re not delusional.”

## Chapter Notes

hey besties!!! theyre talking about wilbur's suicide again in this one!! again!! its mostly dialogue and also some weird metaphor about accidentally waterboarding yourself in the bathtub as a child so be aware of that one too i suppose

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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The absolute last thing Tommy expects to see upon waking up from his painkiller-induced nap is: A. the night sky outside his window, and B. Wilbur sitting on the bench in said window.

Tommy blinks the grogginess out of his eyes as best he can—which he does a shit job at—and eventually just ends up squeezing his eyes shut. The live-in nurses for his mom have been coming in to check on him, too, helping him change and eat and everything else, but the dose of the painkillers is still high enough that he’s fuzzy.

Wilbur is dressed as Phantom, and his knuckles are bandaged.

“I’ve never killed a man before this,” Wilbur says like a cryptic piece of shit, and Tommy swipes his tongue over his lips to try and get a bit of moisture back in them.

“You killed yourself,” he answers. There’s a sick sort of delight in seeing the way Wilbur cringes.

“Fair point, I guess.”

Tommy understands that Wilbur killing people is supposed to be a big deal. He’s followed Phil’s no-killing code for the entire time he’s been Phantom, and Tommy understands that Wilbur killing because of him should probably be this giant grand gesture. A testament to how much Wilbur cares about him. Something cold crawls up his spine at the idea, but it’s not altogether unpleasant. He could just need to change position so he’s not cutting off the circulation to his leg, but it’s whatever.

“Is you killing people supposed to be some kind of apology?” Tommy asks him, wiggling around until he can feel his foot start to hurt when the blood rushes back into it. “Am I supposed to just excuse the shit you put me through because you broke your dumbass code for me?”

“Ideally? Yes. Realistically? No.”

“At least you’re not delusional.”

Wilbur snorts a laugh, shaking his head with a smile that’s a little fond. “I grew out of that phase.” It’s quiet for long enough that Tommy is nearly asleep again before Wilbur actually says something of value. “What I did to you wasn’t fair,” he whispers.

“No, really? I had no idea.”

“I am *trying* to apologize, here.”

“And if I don’t want you to?”

Silence—heavy over their faces like wet fabric. Waterboarding yourself in the bathtub when you were younger because you were curious what would happen; suffocating on fading childhoods and ghostly friendships. An accident on all fronts. You're too young to want to die, but you like the wet washcloth over your closed eyes. Childish innocence long gone.

"I suppose I would deserve that," Wilbur answers. Guilt rolls through Tommy in a way he wishes it wouldn't. He owes Wilbur nothing. He doesn't need to hear him out.

But this feels like it could be an ending, and Tommy is *so* sick of things ending.

"If I wanted you to apologize, what do you think you'd say?"

Wilbur perks up like a puppy whose name has just been called, his entire body turning to face him in the low light. He twitches like he's going to stand up and come over, but then he hesitates. Tommy waits in muggy, pain-induced silence for his friend to do something. He'll fall asleep again if they wait too long.

"Can I come over there?" Wilbur asks him. He *asks*. Wilbur Soot does not *ask*. He takes, and he ruins, and he does not look back on those such things. Tommy has witnessed his destructive nature firsthand, it has shaped him into who he is today. He won't ever recover from it, and he had not thought Wilbur capable of change.

And yet Wilbur asked.

Tommy has always been self-destructive.

"Yeah," he croaks back. "You can come over here."

He keeps his eyes closed and his thoughts as calm as he can when the bed eventually dips on his right. Wilbur leans against the pillows beside him, but unlike before, they don't touch.

The clear hesitation almost makes Tommy want to laugh.

“No apology I give you will ever be good enough,” Wilbur starts poorly, and this time, Tommy really does laugh. “Shut up, I’m just starting.”

“Okay, Speech-boy. Try a little harder, though, you're off to a shitty start.”

It’s quiet, and then Wilbur whispers, “I’m sorry,” and Tommy thinks it will end there.

“Nice.”

“Tommy- I swear-”

“*Alright.* Alright, continue.”

In reality, Tommy knows that there are no amount of words that are going to make up for this. There’s nothing that can remedy the damage done by witnessing what he did, and he knows that. He’s sure Wilbur knows that, too. But he still sits here beside the man who used to be his brother, and he waits.

“You know, uh, apologizing for the shit I did is proving a lot more difficult than I thought. Fuck, um,” he hesitates here, head tipping back to stare at the ceiling. “You don’t have any more stars.”

“You were the one who helped me put them up the first time,” Tommy lulls. Fatigue mixed with exasperation settles heavily between his shoulders.

“Right.” Tommy snickers to himself while Wilbur fumbles for his words. “I’m sorry you found me,” Wilbur whispers at last. “I thought I locked the door.”



“You couldn’t have done it in the fucking bathroom, or something? Or maybe just not at all?”  
He snipes back.

Wilbur snuffles—Tommy hadn’t even known he was making sad noises to begin with—and he fidgets with his own fingers. “I’m not trying to offer an excuse here, okay? But you know about my mom by now, yeah? With the whole revival thing. Goddess of Death, all that?”

“Yeah.”

“She had to leave again. And when she leaves, it’s for a while. She had only just gotten back, you know? And she was leaving again, and I kind of got it in my head that I could go see her if I did what I did. Phi- my dad was watching me closely—”

“I’m guessing you’re shit at being sneaky?”

“Fuck *off*, Tommy,” Wilbur snaps, but he sounds fond. It makes Tommy smile despite the conversation topic. “But yes, I was shit at it. And he figured, you know, I wouldn’t do it while you were around. Which is why we spent so much time at your house.”

“But then you did.”

“Yup.”

“Prick.”

Wilbur heaves an overdramatic sigh. “You are terrible at having serious conversations.”

“I’m not the one that’s supposed to be apologizing right now,” Tommy retorts, and Wilbur barks a laugh. He slams his hand over his mouth shortly after, well aware that, technically, he did break into Tommy’s room. It sends Tommy into a fit of muffled laughter anyway, and Wilbur tries to smother that, too.

“Stop it! Listen, okay, I am doing my best here.”

“Your best is fucking *awful*. ”

“*Tommy!*” At least Wilbur waits until Tommy has laughed himself out this time. “I’m sorry I used you as a way to kill myself, I guess. Death was never... it was never going to be permanent for me, and in my- my selfishness, I guess, I forgot that shit like that is a little traumatic. Especially when you’re just a kid.”

Tommy supposes he can see it if he tries. Having the Goddess of Death for a mother kind of makes the permanence of death seem miniscule. Teenagers are selfish, too. Tommy would’ve done anything to get back to his mother then—he’d do anything to get back to her *now* —but he also would’ve tried to be a little more considerate. Such as not offing himself in the playroom of a child who idolized him.

“I’m not sorry I did what I did,” Wilbur tells him, and Tommy expected that. He’s Wilbur. “But I am sorry I did it in front of you. If I could do it over, I’d take you out of the equation entirely. I’d make sure you never saw it, never knew. I hate what I did to you.”

“You’d take it back if you could?”

“Yes.” He doesn’t hesitate with his answer. “I never meant to ruin you, Toms.”

Tommy snorts under his breath, and he squirms until he can rest his head on Wilbur’s shoulder. “Listen, Wil. You’re not as important as you think you are. With the number of people that have died in front of me, you really think you alone could have ruined me?”

“That isn’t something to brag about,” Wilbur reprimands gently. “You shouldn’t have had to watch anyone die.”

“Sucks to suck, I guess.”

“Was my hypothetical apology any good?” Wilbur asks after a few moments. He hasn’t leaned his head on top of Tommy’s yet, not like he usually does. Tommy is still waiting for him to do so, used to the easy affection, but it hasn’t come.

“Did you mean it?” He asks instead.

“I don’t tend to apologize for things I don’t mean,” Wilbur answers.

Wilbur has never liked apologizing to anyone for anything. He is never wrong, and if he is, he doesn’t admit it. Tommy knows these truths like the back of his hand, *and yet*.

“Hypothetically,” Tommy mutters, “I don’t forgive you.”

“Hypothetically, I would deserve that.”

He fully expects Wilbur to pull away, but he doesn’t even try. Instead, Wilbur’s head finally comes down to rest on his. Tommy can see the purple bruises on Wilbur’s knuckles as the sun pushes the horizon line outside of his window, and he traces them quietly.

Maybe it’s the fatigue that makes his tongue so loose. Maybe it’s the trauma of literally being shot. Maybe he’s just weak. Tommy doesn’t know, and he doesn’t care.

“I don’t like being angry at you, Wil.”

“I’m sorry I was shitty enough that you had to be,” Wilbur responds just as quietly. “Hypothetically, if you felt like it, I wouldn’t be opposed to being better for you.”

That sounds kind of unhealthy if Tommy is going to be honest with himself. Oh well. Self-care was never his best quality.

“Alright,” he whispers. “You can try.”

When the nurse comes in to check his bandages later, Tommy just shrugs a little helplessly. He’s grateful he pays her well enough not to spill Wilbur’s secret since the dipshit decided he was going to take a nice nap on Tommy’s bed instead of changing into civvies and going home.

It’s Thursday. Tommy wonders if he’s well enough to go with Wilbur to Fundy’s soccer game.

## Chapter End Notes

you gotta admit. the bath water that you sucked out of the washcloth as a kid was Divine. slorp.

as per usual: three months and counting!!! rip dad lmao. follow me on twitter @nervousn8 ahaha. you don't have to actually, im in a bit of a merlin arc and all i do is tweet about how hot morgana is and how much i hate the butt ugly dragon, so it probably wouldn't be very fun

# Woooo Family Bonding

## Chapter Summary

“So,” Sam says, drumming his fingers on the wheel of his old pickup truck and decidedly not looking at Tommy. “Remember your confession?”

“That’s I’m secretly super wealthy and the authorities think I’m missing, yeah. I remember it like it was last week and not four months ago.”

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

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“So,” Sam says, drumming his fingers on the wheel of his old pickup truck and decidedly not looking at Tommy. “Remember your confession?”

Tommy genuinely forgot he confessed something. It feels like it’s been almost four months instead of a week. Whoever is in charge of keeping track of Tommy’s life needs to get their shit together, man. Don’t they know having a dead dad is no excuse? Prime.

“That’s I’m secretly super wealthy and the authorities think I’m missing, yeah. I remember it like it was last week and not four months ago.”

Sam’s face screws up in confusion, but Tommy’s trained him well enough not to ask about stuff like this. The older man just flips his turn signal and shakes his head a little bit before he speaks. “I have something I have to tell you, too.”

“Is this a trap?” Tommy blurts, cringing internally when Sam glances at him with mildly panicked eyes. “Is this like that thing that parents do when they make you get in the car with them and then they have A Talk with you because they know you can’t get out? Because I’ll throw myself out of a moving vehicle, Sam. I’m not scared to die.”

“No?” To his credit, Sam handles the clear disbelief and mild concern thing very well. He doesn’t even sound like he fears for Tommy’s mental health at all. “What makes you think that?”

Tommy shrugs and then immediately regrets it, shouting the dirtiest look he can muster at his shoulder. “My dad used to do this to me sometimes. Before we moved here, though. Typically after I would do something to endanger myself or others.”

The fun part about being more or less open with Sam is that there’s no filter now. Tommy’s mouth is talking and his brain is only sort of trying to interject cool words that have actual meanings. He could go on an entire rant about the doll he traded for some of his hair a couple years back. What would Sam think of Uncle Nasty? He should ask.

“Would you prefer we have this conversation when you can get away?” Sam asks all gentle and caring, and Tommy has to remember that Sam is being serious here. He’s genuinely trying to be considerate of Tommy’s emotions and boundaries, and even though that makes him viscerally uncomfortable, he has it on good authority that he deserves nice things. Good authority is Sam.

“No, I’m okay,” Tommy shrugs again, though only with the uninjured shoulder this time, and Sam breathes a sigh.

“Great. Okay.” Things do not sound okay. Sam sounds like he’s about to come out to his conservative parents or something. Tommy doesn’t know what that’s like, but he’s watched enough shows to have seen it. “I’m the Warden.”

Well then.

Tommy takes this in for a second. There’s a very small Tommy in his head running around in a panic, but the much larger Tommy kind of expected this. The green hair. The... well that’s it, really. LIES! Why would the Warden be so invested in Neutral Grounds’ safety if Sam wasn’t also? Tommy should’ve seen the signs. All of these heroes and villains are so bad at hiding their identities.

“Tommy?” Sam presses gently, sounding very concerned. When did he pull over?

“Sam.” He says it very seriously, turning to face Sam slowly. Sam, on his part, looks even more concerned. “How the fuck do you make your eyes do the thing?”

Sam blinks in shock, but there’s the smallest hints of glee pushing at the edges of his expression. “What thing?”

“The thing!”

“Oh? You mean this thing?” Before Tommy’s very eyes, Sam’s bleed from an almost honey brown situated in milky white sclera to vibrant yellow in black. Tommy smacks Sam’s shoulder with his good arm as fast as he can. “Hey! Don’t hit an old man!”

“Old man my ass!” Tommy cries. “You picked up Violet’s crib all by yourself and I couldn’t figure out how—you *bitch*! You asshole! How many times have you come in while I’m working—oh god.” Sam’s laughing in earnest, now, that dumb dad laugh where he leans back in his seat and puts a hand on his chest. Tommy keeps smacking his arm with as much force as he can muster. “Don’t laugh at me! You’ve violated my trust in you! All this time... our friendship has been a lie...”

With a breathy exhale, Sam’s eyes bleed back to normal, and the smile he wears when he looks back at Tommy is tender. “You’re alright, though, right? You’re not upset that I kept this from you?”

Tommy shakes his head and shuffles back into the passenger’s seat with a smile of his own. “If you hadn’t, I probably would’ve made you fry my laptop with your weird lightning powers.”

“Oh, I can’t just use those whenever I want.” Sam’s tone turns serious, and after making sure everything is in place, he merges back into traffic and continues on his way. They’re almost there, anyway. “Those only make an appearance when I’m really angry, or something like that. I haven’t used them in a long, long time.”

“That’s no fun,” Tommy groans, but he kind of gets it. Well, he doesn’t actually get it. But he doesn’t really like the serious tone of voice, so he’s going to let the conversation drop. “Maybe would’ve made you lift stuff though. Like some kind of strong man.”

“It’s good to know my powers would be able to amuse you, Tommy,” Sam says. He sounds a little bit like he’s teasing, but also a little bit fond. Too much like a dad for Tommy’s taste.

Sam turns them down the side road in the suburbs, and eventually, he idles near a small soccer field. Tommy can already see Technoblade’s dumb pink hair from all the way over here. Ranboo’s standing near him, and if he squints, Tommy can see Tubbo by his side.

“Call me if you need anything,” Sam calls when Tommy gets out of the car, and Tommy, eloquently, flips him off over his shoulder. There are no hard feelings given the way Sam laughs as he rolls up the truck’s window and pulls off.

Tubbo sees him first. Tommy raises his hand to wave, and he sort of gets to do so, but then Tubbo is charging at him and quite literally lifting him off the ground. Sometimes he forgets Tubbo does actually have a disproportionate amount of strength for a guy his size. It’s easy to forget when he spends all his time behind a computer or making bombs.

“He lifted Techno earlier,” Ranboo offers in explanation, and Tommy just sighs. Techno looks a little bit like his pride has been wounded, but he otherwise doesn’t react to Tommy being there. Prick. Ranboo presses down on Tubbo’s head when he’s finally carried Tommy over to the small group. “Tubbo. Put Tommy down before you hurt his arm again.”

Tommy doesn’t actually think Tubbo would hurt his arm. Wilbur’s the one that did that when he panicked and smacked Tommy on the shoulder, but Tubbo’s been pretty gentle so far.

His feet hit the grass shortly after, and he breathes in the scent of... there really isn’t much of a smell out here. One of the dads is barbecuing across the field, so he can sort of smell that, but it mostly just smells like grass and sunscreen. Phil is talking to Barbeque Dad across the field, hands on his hips, and Wilbur is standing next to him. They look like they’re talking about something serious.



“How’ve you been, boss man?” Tubbo asks. He offers Tommy a soda, thinks better of it, and then opens it before offering it to him again.

“Same as always,” Tommy answers as he takes it. “I’m actually able to go places now, which is great. Not stuck on bedrest with someone hovering over me like I’m going to die at any fucking second.”

Techno huffs where he sits in his dumb plastic chair, and he lowers his book to frown disapprovingly at Tommy. “Leave Wilbur alone. He’s the same way when Fundy gets sick.”

“You hear that, Tommy? You’re like a son to Wilbur,” Ranboo teases.

“Don’t pretend he doesn’t do the same to both of you when you’re sick,” Techno scolds, and this time it’s Tommy’s turn to laugh.

Tubbo shakes his head and takes a sip from his soda, but then he frowns and spits it out. When he dumps out his can in the grass, three flies go with the liquid. They all elect not to talk about it. “Techno’s been mothering us because he misses Mumza,” Tubbo tells Tommy conspiratorially, and Tommy snickers into his hand. “They have a book club together.”

Phil and Wilbur begin to make their way across the field, and that’s when Tommy notices Ace and Sally chasing after Fundy behind them. Just to their right, another mom stares hard at Tommy. He jolts when he makes eye contact with her, but he offers her an easy smile and turns back in time to greet Wilbur.

He doesn’t end up greeting Wilbur, though, and instead abandons his friend in favor of crouching down and greeting Fundy, instead.

“Hey, little guy!” He cheers, and Fundy gives him an awkward hug. “You ready for your big game?”

“I’m gonna kick ass!” Fundy tells him seriously, and Sally turns to hide her laugh in Ace’s shoulder.

Wilbur crouches down, too, a serious expression on his face. “Fundy, you know you’re not supposed to use that kind of language.”

“You use it all the time,” Fundy retorts pointedly, and Tommy doesn’t try to hide his laugh. He’s no mother. He owes Wilbur’s lack of parenting skills nothing.

The coach calls for his team, and Fundy takes off alongside several other children to gather around his legs. Tommy doesn’t actually know what they’re playing for, or what kind of game this is, but he’s happy to be included. Also, free soda and time with his friends.

“How’s your shoulder?” Wilbur asks him once Fundy’s situated with his team, and Tommy offers him a small but genuine smile.

“Absolutely terrible. I think it’s going to fall off.”

Behind him, Phil just sighs. If Tommy likes being fussed over, that’s his business and his business alone.

## Chapter End Notes

good morning gay people, its me, confident cevin (with a c instead of a k for alliteration), filling in for nervous nate as he has suffered a serious case of forgetting he was real and also hyperfixating on something that is not the dsmp. but i, confident cevin and not nervous nate, wanted to do something a little silly so im pretending i havent lost the original plot of this fic bc i didnt write it down somewhere and am updating it. isnt that wild. yeehaw.

no i didn't spell check this. you get the first draft just like my professors do



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